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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

JACK COHEN — PROFIT AND SURPLUS UNDER CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM

ERIC HOBSBAWM — THE DIALOGUE ON MARXISM

JEAN SURET-CANALE — THE TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES OF TROPICAL AFRICA

DISCUSSION:

JACK DUNMAN — RUDYARD KIPLING RE-ESTIMATED

PAUL REDWAY — THE FREEDOM OF ART

MIKE STEADMAN — THE LAWS OF DIALECTICS

AHMED OSMAN — SOCIAL ECONOMIC FORMATIONS

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Marxism Today

Vol. 10 No. 2

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Editorial Comments

THE week of discussion arranged by this journal to open the year 1966 brought together a total of over 1,100 people to discuss a wide range of current topics at seven meetings at the Mahatma Gandhi and Caxton halls.

Though it did not prove possible to have Marxist and non-Marxist speakers make opening statements at all the meetings, each inspired so much audience participation that the event turned into a real dialogue of the left.

Brian Simon's keynote speech on the political, economic and moral crisis of Britain raised at the outset a host of questions which were eagerly taken up from the floor and which cropped up again and again during the week. This was notable in the Brains Trust on economic planning that followed and which was entirely a discussion evening with no prepared openings, but replies and comments by J. R. Campbell and Jim Mortimer on questions and views put forward by the audience. Following that Dr. Sam Lilley with his very fine lecture on science, technology and socialism inspired a remarkably interesting discussion in which students and politically experienced factory workers took equal part.

At the fourth session, architects and planners Dave Grove and W. Houghton Evans combined with students of these subjects and laymen to consider the sort of environment we in Britain should live and work in. The discussion was well illustrated by the slides of an anonymous architect projected on to the tiniest of screens around which the audience crowded.

The subject of the Arts and Socialism attracted the biggest audience (about 450) all of whom seemed ready to argue vigorously with Lindsay Anderson, John Berger and Arnold Kettle, with Alan Bush presiding. This was followed by a more sober dialogue between a Humanist (Hector Hawton of the Rationalist Press Association) and a Marxist (Martin Milligan) about the life, freedom and happiness of man as an individual in the world and society.

The final meeting to discuss the transition to socialism in Britain, led by John Gollan and Ralph Miliband, was as much concerned with the immediate question of unity of the left as with the subject of its title.

Marxism Today, and indeed the whole socialist movement, is much indebted to the thirteen main speakers, the seven chairmen and the hundred and more people who took part in the discussion. Some indication of the keenness of the audiences is shown by their purchases of literature at the bookstalls, which totalled over £80—and they gave nearly as much (£65) to the collections we had to make to help to meet our costs.

Undoubtedly the week can be said to have started a number of public discussions about problems with which progressive people are deeply concerned. We must see to it that in one form or another this sort of thing is repeated continually.

Escalating the "Peace Offensive"

We have noted before that President Johnson always speaks of peace when he is planning the further extension of American aggression in South East Asia. Now it is clear that he plans an enormous extension of the American attacks not only on Vietnam but on Laos and Cambodia as well. Huge sums are needed for this, and he has asked Congress for them. In the light of this, his escalated "peace offensive" is clearly a smoke-screen to cover the massive escalation of his war offensive.

It is a sign of the widespread and growing disgust with Johnson's hypocrisy that British press correspondents in Washington have publicly reported that the "peace offensive" is only a propaganda move. Of course the Americans would be glad to get out of the Vietnam quagmire, providing that by one means or another they could maintain their grip on South Vietnam. This is what they would hope to achieve from "unconditional negotiations"—namely, that the victim of brutal aggression would agree to leave the aggressor in control.

But the real position has been stated by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam: all that is needed for peace is for the American troops to go.

National Incomes

It is wrong to attack the Public Schools, Sir Peter Runge, vice-President of the Confederation of British Industry, tells us. The public schools have given Britain most of its "industrial leadership", he says. Surely this is no recommendation for the public schools, for the more that one looks at British industry the more evident is the fact that under Tory rule it began slipping in almost every department of activity.

The Times Review of Industry has just been comparing Britain's National Income statistics with those of other countries, and the results should shatter complacency. The method of comparing the

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statistics consists of converting the income and expenditure of the various countries into terms of U.S. dollars. This enables a rough and ready comparison to be made between the various countries. It is a method open to some errors but not very much.

The first comparison is that of National Incomes. In a league table consisting of 20 capitalist countries Britain is *ninth* from the top of the league. Above it are U.S.A., Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, France, West Germany and Luxemburg.

When it comes to expanding the capital equipment of the country (fixed investment) Britain is second from the bottom of the league. It spends less of its national income on fixed investment than any other country in the 20, with the solitary exception of the Republic of Ireland.

What About Building?

The Times Review gives a highly interesting table on housebuilding, and states that the figures indicate "in comparison with five other Western European countries the United Kingdom is below average in terms of the provision of new houses".

Here are the figures of new houses per thousand of the population in 1964: Sweden 11.4, West Germany 9.8, Netherlands 8.3, France 7.6, Italy 8.1 and United Kingdom 6.9.

The amount spent on new houses as a proportion of the national incomes also shows Britain in an unfavourable light. Here it is: Sweden 5.3 per cent, West Germany 5.6, Netherlands 4.0, France 4.8, Italy 6.1, and the United Kingdom 3.1 per cent.

However, when it comes to private spending per head the United Kingdom, as befits a country with rich rentier groups, creeps up the league table a bit. It is eighth on the league table which shows private spending per head. Above it are U.S.A., Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, France and Belgium.

Standard of Living

Quoting some estimates made by the *Financial Times* the Review shows that a specimen basket of food is cheaper in London than in any major city with the exception of Montreal and Canada. London rents however are higher than in most capitals with the exception of New York, Paris, Rome and Stockholm.

With respect to clothing London is the fifth dearest capital, surpassed only by Paris, Brussels, Montreal and New York.

When it comes to the price of cigarettes Britain is second from the top of the league, surpassed only by Sweden. Every other country in the world is well below Britain. Yet whenever a Chancellor gets into difficulties he is sure to turn to heavier taxation of tobacco and drink for salvation.

Creeping Up?

There is not much chance of Britain creeping up in 1966, for the credit squeeze is continuing and the Government is preventing the British capitalist economy taken as a whole from expanding. At the same moment it is asking the workers to enter into productivity agreements and raise their individual outputs.

What will be the effect of preventing the expansion of the economy on the one hand, and encouraging the individual worker to increase his output on the other? The only result will be an increase in unemployment.

We are never told in plain language what this type of credit restriction is meant to do. It is hinted that the credit squeeze will in some way enable the British economy to recover from its present difficulties, but we are never told how this is meant to operate. From time to time the financial press suggests that the only reason for keeping on the squeeze is that the European bankers have insisted upon it, in return for helping Britain with loans. It is a piece of bankers' mystique which is quite irrelevant to Britain's problems. It is high time that the trade union movement ceased to stand on the side lines, discussing to what extent the credit squeeze will create more unemployment, and began to demand the lifting of the squeeze altogether.

Incomes Drive Is On

It is clear that the Government is now going to launch a powerful drive to get every union, applying for a wage increase, to conform to its incomes policy. Those union leaders who have been appeasing their members with the notion that the policy will not apply to them will now have to eat their words.

It is now becoming clear that the Prices and Incomes Board is out to impose a radical change in existing collective bargaining, arbitration and conciliation machinery and wages councils. This machinery has been built up gradually throughout this century, and both unions and employers have got used to its methods of operation and to the various conventions which have gradually developed.

Thus trade unionists have always kept a close watch on the movements of the retail prices index to see whether the purchasing power of their wages and earnings was rising or falling; they have always compared their wages and conditions with those of other workers, they have always watched the movement of prices and profits in their own particular industry.

The theorists of the incomes policy are not

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concerned with investigating how wage bargaining works or how it can be modified if at all. They want wage bargaining to be conducted on the basis of a very simple principle that they have evolved. They have never enquired whether that principle is operational to any extent. They are in effect asking trade unionists, in making wage claims, to play down claims for increased wages on account of the rise in retail prices, to gradually drop the practice of comparing their wages and salaries with those of other workers, and if they want a rise because productivity has been going up to make sure that it is the productivity of the economy as a whole that is to be taken into account and not their own productivity or that of their particular industry. In short they are being asked to shed their present methods of wage bargaining and adopt that recommended by incomes policy theorists.

If the trade unionists ask where such an incomes policy has been applied and whether it has operated in the workers' interests, they will have to accept the reply that nowhere in any country has such a policy been applied and that the incomes policy theorists are working on the basis of pure untested theory, to which however they expect all workers to conform. In other words trade unionists are expected to tolerate being pushed blindfolded into the acceptance of a new untried method of wage determination and are abused when they show their reluctance to accept this procedure.

Swedish "Model"

Two or three years ago Sweden was alleged to be a country where a wonderful new wages policy was coming into operation. Deputations went from Britain and elsewhere to penetrate its mysteries and came back without a clue as to what the wonderful new policy was, let alone how it could be operated.

Now it appears that after national negotiations between the Swedish Trades Union Congress and the central body of the Swedish employers, which have been going on for weeks, the State is intervening to break the deadlock.

The unions are asking for "an average increase of 10 per cent with individual increases up to 30 per cent for lower paid members". (They don't appear to have heard of George Brown and his 3-3½ per cent "norm".) They say they won't accept less because the cost of living went up by 6 per cent in the last twelve months. If the Swedes were to accept a Brown type of wage policy they would be entitled to an overall increase of around 4 per cent, based on the productivity of the economy as a whole. In short they would be asked to accept a reduction in real wages. No wonder they are refusing. British trade unionists should be asking where a George Brown type of incomes policy is being accepted by a trade union movement anywhere in the wide, wide world, outside right-wing circles in Britain.

More Humbug—More Hunger

The Freedom from Hunger Campaign has just given its report for the first five years 1960-65. With the Duke of Edinburgh as its patron, and Harold Wilson, Alec Douglas Home, and Joseph Grimond as Vice-presidents, it has been able to reach out to wide circles among the British people with its humanitarian appeal for the hungry millions of the world.

Well-meaning people all over Britain have responded to this appeal, and many hundreds of active campaigners have been extremely busy throughout the country putting the case for voluntary aid and in making collections for the fund.

Yet, at the end of five years the total amount raised from all sources was just over £6 million. Bearing in mind that there are over 1,500 million people below the poverty line (most of them actually suffering from hunger) in the economically undeveloped countries of the world in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, it will be seen that this accounts for *less than one penny per head over a period of five years*.

Not only does the Freedom from Hunger Campaign fail to touch a tiny fringe of the problem. It can be (and is being) used to conceal the real causes of world hunger and to sidetrack the more effective measures which must be taken to end this shameful situation.

Even British financial circles come somewhat nearer the truth in this matter. Dealing with only one aspect of the problem (the payment of interest by undeveloped countries on foreign loans from the imperialist countries) "Lombard" of the *Financial Times* recently made clear that there is no hope of "solving the world problem of preventing the poor from getting poorer".

He was referring to the fact that between 1959 and 1963 the proportion of export earnings of the undeveloped countries which went to pay interest alone on foreign loans increased from 3½ to 8½ per cent. This proportion is now rapidly increasing because:

> ". . . between now and the early 1970's the underdeveloped countries as a whole are due to repay from a quarter to a half of their foreign debt" (February 7, 1966).

This is estimated to be in the region of nearly £10,000 million, or £2,000 million per annum. "Lombard" estimates the total annual export earnings of these countries to be in the region of £13,000 million. So that the proportion of their export earnings used to pay interest on foreign loans will rise from 8½ per cent to 15 per cent in the next

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five years. This means that the undeveloped countries are expected to pay an extra £650 million in interest in the next five years, more than a hundred times as much as the £6 million they got in the past five years from the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. What a contrast!

It is argued by "Lombard" that "unless the advanced countries arrange to provide them with massive relief from these commitments" the underdeveloped countries will have to default on their payments or cut their imports, and so reduce even their present low living standards. It is most unlikely that the imperialist countries would willingly take this step. There are moves on foot to suggest lower interest rates, but only if the countries concerned will agree to "political strings" being attached. So we are back to the start—the only basic remedy is to end the system of imperialism and its strategy of neo-colonialism.

Britain and the United Nations

Britain's voting record at last autumn's session of the United Nations General Assembly maintains the "principle" of opposition to progressive resolutions and alliance with the forces of reaction. One of the most striking examples was the vote on the "Declaration on the Impermissibility of Intervention in the Internal Affairs of States and on the Safeguarding of their Independence and Sovereignty". The Assembly adopted this Declaration by 109 votes; there was one recorded abstention—Britain. Portugal and South Africa were among the few who avoided being put on the record by being absent during the voting.

Another resolution adopted by the Assembly condemned Portugal's colonial policy, and called on Portugal's Nato allies to stop all shipments of arms to Portugal and to withhold any assistance enabling Portugal to continue her repression of African peoples. 66 states voted for this resolution; 26 opposed it, including Britain, the United States, Portugal and Spain.

A third resolution called for action to end the policy of apartheid pursued by the South African Government; it put on record the fact that Britain and other states were co-operating politically, economically and militarily with the racialist regime in South Africa. This resolution was adopted by 80 votes to two (Portugal and South Africa); Britain was one of the 16 abstentions.

A fourth resolution, calling on all countries to render material and moral support to the national liberation movements in colonial territories, was adopted by 74 votes to six—the six including Britain, Portugal, South Africa and the United States.

The fact that these resolutions were adopted by a majority of the General Assembly shows that the increasing number of independent—largely ex-colonial—states is beginning to break down the "built-in" influence of the imperialist powers. It is a permanent monument to the British Labour Government's support of imperialism that Britain's votes are on the wrong side.

People's History of England

The famous *People's History of England*, by A. L. Morton, is now appearing as a paperback at 15s., a joint publication of Seven Seas Books, Berlin, and Lawrence and Wishart, London. This is a very beautifully produced book of nearly 600 pages, with a glossy pictorial cover, and is very good value for the money.

A People's History of England was first published in 1938, in the days of the "Left Book Club". It has been reprinted eight times. Several generations of Marxists have used it as a standard work—and not only Marxists; both teachers and students have found in it a history of England that really explains the development of our national life. It covers the whole of our national history from the Ancient Britons to the end of the First World War.

It is difficult now to assess fully the debt which British Marxism owes to this work of A. L. Morton. In nearly thirty years since it was first published, British Marxist historians have won a world-wide reputation—such names as Eric Hobsbawm, George Rude and Christopher Hill figure in every serious bibliography, and an immense amount of important research has been done by them and a number of other younger Marxist scholars in Britain. Just lately, British Marxists have made a contribution of world-wide importance in the theoretical discussion of "stages of development of history".

A People's History of England was undoubtedly one of the first sources of all this rich development of British Marxist historiography. A. L. Morton, and all these historians, were pupils of the late Dona Torr, who taught a high standard of how socialist research should be conducted. *A People's History* began the development which has proved so fruitful since. In a masterly way, and in a way that has fully retained its authenticity in the light of so much detailed research done subsequently on particular periods, A. L. Morton's work connected together all the threads of English history into a coherent picture of the development of the economy, politics and the whole national life of England.

We strongly recommend readers of *Marxism Today* to invest in this new paperback, and to introduce it to others.

The Tate and the Royal Academy

Two splendid exhibitions of painting can be seen this month in London: Paul Bonnard at the Royal

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Academy, and Gauguin and the Pont-Aven Group at the Tate, arranged by the Arts Council. Both should be seen and will give great pleasure. Gauguin is almost a household word, Bonnard hardly known to the general public. But now critics are saying he could perhaps be the greatest painter of the century. He is certainly one of the happiest, and his wonderful colour will delight everyone.

There are some interesting differences between the organisation of the two shows. At the Tate, the entrance is 3s. 6d. and there is a late opening (till 8.00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays). At the Academy the entrance is 10s. 0d. (5s. 0d. on Sundays), and opening to 8.00 p.m. is only on Wednesdays. The Arts Council provides for 10s. 6d. a splendidly produced catalogue with colour as well as black and white reproductions, with helpful notes on many of the pictures. The Academy offers for 7s. 6d. a much less attractive book, with no colour, fewer notes, and badly laid out black and white reproductions. They charge 2s. 6d. for *hiring* a copy! Both, by the way, have useful introductions by Denys Sutton.

The Tate contains 320 pictures, etc., and the Academy 355. But by ingenious use of screens, the Tate provides a good view in one large hall of all the pictures. The vast wall spaces of the Academy are all used and while this gives a slightly better light, it must be extremely expensive. In justice, the Central Hall of the Academy, where the brightest pictures are hung together, is extremely striking.

The charge at the Academy is in any case outrageous. It might be hoped it was designed to encourage the purchase of season tickets, at the relatively reasonable price of £1 (10s. 0d. at the Tate). But no publicity is given to this facility in catalogue or posters, and few will become aware of it before they reach the entrance barrier.

This contrast is of significance because the Arts Council, for all its unrepresentative constitution and tendency to preciousness, is in some sense a public body and receives a Government subsidy. It and its officers have certainly learnt a good deal about helping ordinary people to enjoy and understand the Arts.

The Royal Academy is not yet, it would seem from these arrangements, altogether free from its old idea that one of its functions is to keep ordinary people *away* from the Arts. There is a strong case for giving it some Government money to reduce its fantastic prices (what would the Prices and Incomes Board have to say?) and in return, bringing it under the general control of the Arts Council.

But however excessive the charge, Bonnard himself cannot be valued in cash, and the Exhibition must be seen.

German Labour History

Some three years ago the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party decided to organise a group of historians, writers, etc., to work on a history of the German working class movement.

A large group was formed with Dr. Lothar Berthold as Secretary, and they worked out plans for an 8-volume history to cover the whole period from the first beginnings of working class activity until 1963.

Now the first two volumes have just appeared—the first covering the origins of the German Labour movement until the end of the 19th century, the second from 1900-1917.

The next three volumes (1917-1945) will appear in March.

Our German-speaking readers will look forward to this exciting contribution to the study of the history of the working class.

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Profit and Surplus under Capitalism and Socialism

Jack Cohen

THE discussion on the working of the economic system in the Socialist countries, the changes in the system of economic management which are being made in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, G.D.R. etc., the mention of the words "profit" and "profitability" in connection with these changes, have all evoked predictable responses from economists and "Kremlinologists" in the capitalist countries. These have interpreted the changes as a kind of tacit admission of failure on the part of the Socialist economic system; a "declaration of intent" to return to the "norms" of the capitalist economic system, to the "free enterprise economy"—with profit as its motive and regulator.

Predictable Responses

One can understand why these gentlemen are making such a gleeful noise, why they advance such absurd and totally unwarranted charges. These days, it is not so much that the wish is father to the thought, although the wish has never been abandoned. In less than two years time, the Soviet Union will have existed for half a century. Throughout this whole period, the capitalist powers have tried their utmost—and not mainly with words and wishes either—to bring about the return of the Soviet Union to the capitalist fold. And they have failed dismally. No, it is because it is in the field of economic life and practice that the capitalist world faces its greatest challenge from the countries of socialism.

And if the socialist economic system can somehow be shown to be a "failure", if the Soviet Union and other socialist countries can be made out to be setting out on "the return" to capitalism, the apologists of capitalism will naturally want to throw their hats in the air.

If one takes the broad view—not overlooking temporary ups and downs in this or that year, country or branch of industry—and considers the general trend, the rates of economic growth over a long period, the stability and perspectives of the rival economic (and consequently political) systems, such questions as what sustains the economy, the future for automation, the possibilities of unemployment, one can soon see where the general superiority lies.

And so changes designed to meet a new stage of economic and social development; to improve the workings of the economic system in line with this new stage—not primarily in any purely technical sense, but in its capacity to improve the wellbeing of the wealth-producers and the people generally—are howled off as "retreats" from socialism back to the tried and tested paths of capitalist enterprise.

The real scope of the proposed economic changes, the place of "profit" in these changes, the "arguments" of the capitalist soothsayers, have been dealt with in a large number of authoritative articles.[1] Here it is not intended to repeat what has been said so excellently elsewhere. It is simply intended to treat the nature and basis of surplus and profit under capitalism and under socialism in a broader and more general fashion.

Social Relations

This is necessary for the reason that the use of the same word—"profit"—has, as was said above, been distorted to imply that they mean *the same kind of thing*, the existence of the same kind of social relations, in the two systems. Workers could, as a consequence, be led to believe that profit must imply *exploitation* in the socialist countries, for, as they know only too well, this is its basis under capitalism.

"Profit", the "profit-making system", have rightly been "dirty words" in the capitalist countries, targets for attacks by socialist propagandists and agitators for decades, and their elimination the declared aim of all genuine socialist movements. The old pioneers of British socialism coined the slogan "Production for use and not for profit" when they were defining the economic basis of socialism. There are thus deep roots in the British Labour movement for regarding the word "profit" with deep suspicion, especially in relation to socialism, and for the idea that socialism and profit are, by definition, mutually exclusive and incompatible.

---

[1] Andrew Rothstein, *Labour Monthly*, February 1965.
Prof. Y. Liberman, *Labour Monthly*, December 1965.
Maurice Dobb, *Marxism Today*, September 1965.
Lev Alter, *Marxism Today*, December 1965.
Zdyslav Shults, *World Marxist Review*, No. 6, 1965.

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As is the case with so many other things, one has to say that they are and they are not, and this whole contribution has the aim of clarifying this proposition.

We can do no better than start with a point of decisive importance emphasised by Marx again and again. This is, the importance of the character of the social relations, the specific historical character of society at any given period, for the determination of the meaning, the character, the existence of such categories as "capital", "labour" and, we may add, of "profit" also, as it is generally understood.

> "A Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a slave in certain relations. A cotton spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton. It becomes *capital* only in certain relations. Torn from these relationships it is no more capital than gold in itself is *money*, or sugar the price of sugar" (Karl Marx *Wage Labour and Capital*).

Marx continues:

> "In production, men not only act on nature but also on one another. . . . In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations . . . does production take place . . . *The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and specifically a society at a specific stage of historical development*, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character."
>
> ". . . *Capital* also is a social relation of production. *It is a bourgeois production relation.* A production relation of bourgeois society" (Marx's emphasis throughout).

Bearing this in mind we can see that although the words "capital", "wages", "profit" are used both in capitalist and socialist countries, the different social relations which prevail in each of the two systems mean that they constitute quite different things in real life.

The social relations existing under capitalism are characterised by the existence of two main classes, whose interests are diametrically opposed to one another and between which fierce class struggle rages. This arises from the relation of each of these classes to the means of production and from the aim and motive of production itself. Production takes place on the basis of the private ownership of the means of production and of what is produced, by a tiny minority, which exploits the majority of the people, the wealth producers of one kind or another. By this we mean that the minority lives off the surplus wealth created by these producers, which belongs to it, in virtue of its ownership of the means of production. Labour power is a commodity—the only commodity—owned by those who do *not* own the means of production. And this they have to sell to those who do, in order to exist.

Thus in the given social relations of capitalism: "*Capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour pre-supposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other*" (Karl Marx, *ibid.* His emphasis).

Under socialism, the social relations are characterised by the *social* ownership of the means of production as far as industry is concerned and, increasingly, by the *collective* ownership of the means of production in agriculture. The collective ownership of the *products* of agriculture has existed from the beginning. This means that the means of production are owned almost entirely by society as a whole and especially by those who work them.

This is the basis for the disappearance of hostile, antagonistic classes and of the class struggle under socialism. This is the foundation for labour power ceasing to be a commodity which the worker has to sell to a private capitalist in order to exist.

The workers now collectively *own* both the *means of production* and the *product* of their collective labours. Of course, people have to work under socialism and their labour creates a surplus, but under the conditions of socialism, because the workers own the means of production and the product, this is done without anybody exploiting anybody else. Labour under socialism does not "bring forth" capital. *And this is one of the main differences between the category "profit" under capitalism and under socialism.*

This will be clear if we consider profit in more detail. Under capitalism profit is a part of the surplus value produced by the workers in the process of capitalist production—that part accruing to the capitalist after he has covered his outlay on wages, raw materials, depreciation of machinery; and paid rent and interest on loans etc. What this looks like in our country can be seen from the following figures:

The 1964 national income, before taxation, was £26,452 million, according to the bluebook *National Income and Expenditure* 1965. This total was distributed as under:

	million
Wages	£10,700
Salaries	6,965
	£17,665
Rent, dividends, interest, and undistributed profits . .	£8,787

That is, roughly two-thirds of the national income went to workers and employees, one-third to capitalists, landlords, etc.

And the biggest part of the surplus goes to a tiny top section of the ruling class as the following figures show. Out of a total of 27,300,000 taxable

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incomes, the following constitute the highest ranges (before tax).

Income per annum	No. of incomes involved (in thousands)	Total income received (in £ millions)
£3,000- £5,000	210	789
£5,000-£10,000	105	698
£10,000-£20,000	20	265
Over £20,000	4	130
Totals	339	1,882 [2]

The production of a surplus of values, however, is not simply a characteristic of capitalist society. It is the foundation of all social advance and is a necessity for all forms of society, especially for socialist society in its advance to the higher stage of Communism.

> "The whole development of human society beyond the stage of brute savagery begins from the day when the labour of the family created more products than were necessary for its maintenance, from the day when one portion of labour could be devoted to the production no longer of the means of subsistence, but of means of production. A surplus of the product of labour over and above the costs of maintenance of the labour, and the formation and enlargement, by means of this surplus, of a social production and reserve fund, was and is the basis of all social, political and intellectual progress. *In history up to the present, this fund has been in the possession of a privileged class.* . . . The coming social revolution will for the first time make this social production and reserve fund . . . a really social fund, *by taking it out of the hands of the privileged class and transferring it to the whole of society—as its common property*" (Engels *Anti-Dühring*, Part 2, V. My emphasis, *J.C.*).

This is exactly what has happened in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It is the essential basis for socialist planning, not only to increase production but primarily by increasing production, to increase, expand, improve the material and cultural standards of the people.

Before dealing with this, let us examine *how* the surplus is produced under capitalism and under socialism.

The Surplus Under Capitalism

As is well known, under capitalism, the surplus is made up of the values embodied in *the unpaid labour* of the workers in the process of capitalist production; that is, by the *exploitation* of the working class. This is because the social relations prevailing under capitalism make labour power a commodity. It is bought and sold as such and the value and price are, in general, determined like those of every other commodity, by the sum of values which go into its production. Or, as the Marxist theory of value has it—by "the socially necessary labour time embodied in its production."

The worker is therefore paid not for the values he produces—otherwise there would be no surplus—but for the values which go into the production of his capacity to labour for a given time (hour, day, week) or to produce a given quantity of goods (piece work).

The capitalist sells the commodities produced *at around their value*, that is, for sums of money which express *the whole* of the value, the socially necessary labour time, embodied in the product. These consist of the values embodied in the wages, i.e. the values which go to the production and reproduction of the workers' labour power and *for which the worker is paid*, but also of the *new values* added by the workers' labour, for which he is *not paid*. For the worker does not and cannot stop working as soon as he has reproduced the value of his own wages. He has to go on for he is paid by the hour, day, week, or piece. If he did stop when he had produced the values of his own wages, there would be no surplus and hence no profit.

The tiny section of the population which gets the surplus under capitalism spends it in a variety of ways. First and foremost it lives well—much, much better than do the wealth producers. But a large part of the surplus is ploughed back into industry, i.e. the surplus is used to accumulate capital and to assist in the expanded reproduction of capital. *But the aim here is always to get still more profit in the future.* If this cannot be anticipated, investment is discouraged.

From the taxes paid by both workers (directly at source through PAYE and especially through indirect taxation) and capitalists such social services as the people have managed to win (Health, Education, Unemployment Benefits, Pensions, etc.) and other state expenditure (National Debt, Defence, etc.) are financed. In actual fact it is the workers who finance everything, for it is from the surplus deriving from their unpaid labour that the capitalists pay their taxes, employers' contributions, etc.

We can sum up by saying that under capitalism, the surplus (of which profit is part) belongs to a tiny minority, is acquired by robbing the wealth producers (and the whole of society) of a great amount of wealth which could be used for social purposes; that planning to increase the surplus for

[2] These figures overstate the number of incomes in these classes since incomes within the same family are often listed separately—and understate the taxable incomes, since tax avoidance is very widely practised in the higher income brackets.

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the good of society is impossible since it is privately owned, and that when the surplus is increased, the main beneficiaries are a tiny class of exploiters.

The Surplus Under Socialism

Let us now turn to socialism. Here also a surplus is produced, i.e. there is a difference between the total wealth produced and what comes back directly and immediately to the workers either in the form of wages or in the form of social services. *But there is no exploitation. Firstly* because the surplus is not creamed off by non-producers, as is the case under capitalism, in the form of dividends, undistributed profits etc. This means that the worker is not working part of the time for nothing—for somebody else as he is under capitalism. He is working for himself and for the society of wealth producers to which he belongs, all the time. Neither is the decison as to how this surplus is to be used, how much of it ploughed back into production dictated as it is under capitalism by considerations of personal profit for a few.

Secondly, although the individual workers get a money return for their labour, this is not strictly speaking "wages"—i.e. it is not the price of the commodity "labour power" which the worker has *to sell* to an employer in order to exist. On the contrary, it is one form of distributing the part of the national income intended for consumption by individuals. As the national income rises, the part intended for consumption rises, and therefore wages rise.

Workers as a class own the means of industrial production. They do not sell their labour power to themselves. *One kind of return they receive for their labour is in the form of money.* Its amount is not dictated by the law of supply and demand, by struggles between workers and employers, as under capitalism. It is regulated by the workers as trade unionists agreeing with members of their own class who manage the economic apparatus on behalf of the whole of society.

But the money return is only one aspect of what the worker gets back. True he does not get back all the values he produces, directly and immediately. If he did there would be no surplus, no basis for expanded socialist reproduction, and the foundation for future advances in all fields would be "eaten up". But a big portion of the surplus does come back to them in other ways than a money return.

Social services and social insurance, in the Soviet Union for example, are overwhelmingly free and non-contributory. Housing is regarded as a social service, rent not as a rule exceeding 4 per cent of the family budget. Even this small charge is intended to be abolished between 1970-1980. Taxation is very small. Only about 7 per cent of budget revenue comes from tax-receipts.

What the worker does not get back directly and immediately either in money form or in social services also serves both his present and future interests. First, this surplus belongs to him and his class and is allocated for him and his class. That part of the surplus which is accumulated (re-invested) is the guarantee of improved conditions in the future, of speeding the transition to communism, by enormously expanding the economic basis of the whole system. The money allocated—regretfully—for defence, is money used to maintain and defend the socialist system.

Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* already discussed how a communist society would have to dispose of the wealth it created, and, for him, socialist society constituted the lower phase of communist society. He was arguing against the formulations in that programme about "fair distribution" and "the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society".

He points out that "proceeds of labour" means the total social product. He continues:

> "From this must now be deducted,
>
> *First*, cover for replacement of the means of production used up.
>
> *Secondly*, additional portion for the expansion of production.
>
> *Thirdly*, reserve or insurance funds to provide against accidents, dislocations caused by natural calamities. . . .
>
> "There remains the other part of the social product, intended to serve as means of production. . . . (from which) there has to be deducted
>
> "*First the general cost of administration not belonging to production.*
>
> Secondly, that which is intended for the common satisfaction of needs, such as schools, health services, etc. . . .
>
> Thirdly, funds for those unable to work, etc."

And he concludes with the point made above—"What the producer is deprived of in his capacity as a private individual (the deductions listed above, *J.C.*), benefits him directly or indirectly in his capacity as a member of society". (All emphasis by Marx.)

In the U.S.S.R.

And this is exactly how the national income is planned to be distributed in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

"The socialist state distributes its national income by plan in order to ensure the proportionate development of the whole of society. About a quarter of this income is used to enlarge and improve production—i.e. it goes into accumulation . . . the remaining three-quarters go into direct consumption. The largest portion (about 90 per cent of the entire consumption fund) is distributed in the form

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of wages and salaries . . . the rest of the consumption fund is likewise spent on satisfying the population's material and cultural requirements. This money is used to run and build educational institutions, hospitals and clinics, blocks of flats and communal enterprises, scientific institutions, cultural establishments and so on.

"A total of 1.3 per cent of the budget is allocated to increase state reserves and cover the expenses of state administration." (*U.S.S.R.: Questions and Answers*. Novosti Press, 1965.)

Thus not one penny goes to rent, interest and "profit" as this latter word is understood "in the West"—i.e. a sum of values expressed in money which arises out of the production and sale of commodities but which is the private property of an individual employer or of a group of capitalists.

A look at the budget adopted by the Supreme Soviet in December 1965 fills in the process quoted above in more detail.

> Revenue in 1965 will amount to 105,400 million roubles; expenditure to 105,300 million.
>
> 91.6 per cent of the budget revenue will be made up of payments from *enterprises and organisations of the socialist economy* (not primarily from taxes—direct and indirect on individuals as is the case in Great Britain, *J.C.*).
>
> A total of 52,900 million is to go to capital investment. Of this the largest amount will go to agriculture, light industry and certain others. More than half of all the investments in the national economy will be used to develop industry. A total of 40,300 million (an increase of 2,800 million) is being allocated for social and cultural requirements.
>
> The national income is planned to increase by 6.4 per cent in 1966 on a *per capita* basis. Real incomes will go up by 6½ per cent in 1966 twice as much as the annual average increase between 1959 and 1965.
>
> Expenditure on state social insurance and social security (free, non-contributory) will go up by 6 per cent in 1966.
>
> Owing to the worsening of the international situation defence expenditure will also increase by 5 per cent.

Profit Under Socialism

Thus we may sum up:

Under capitalism, profit is part of the surplus created by the workers in the process of production *which does not come back to them in any way whatsoever*. It goes to the class of exploiters and constitutes the material basis of their existence.

Under socialism profit is not something on which a class lives without working. Profit is rather a kind of yard-stick for determining the efficiency of socialist enterprises, and its acquisition is a matter of the greatest interest not only to the workers in particular enterprises but to socialist society as a whole.

We can therefore define profit under socialism as the difference between the values which society puts into enterprises (in the way of machinery, raw materials, labour power) and what comes back. In some cases (where enterprises are still in course of construction or where they are just beginning to operate) it is inevitable that the return will be less than the outlay for a certain period.

But if socialist society is to be able to provide constantly rising material and cultural standards for its citizens, if the basis is to be laid for advance to the higher stage—full communist society—then the overwhelming majority of its enterprises must show a return which is greater than the outlay, that is, they must produce a surplus, that is they must be making a "profit" in the socialist sense of the term.

And in this sense Soviet industry has always had the aim of making a profit—as have the industries of all other socialist countries—from the earliest days when Lenin emphasised this aim as essential, to the present time.

A factory not making a profit is not closed down and its workers thrown on the streets as would happen sooner or later in capitalist countries. But as can be seen, such a factory is a drag on the whole socialist economic system, slowing down the possibility of advance both in "delivering the goods" of socialism to the people—and to communism.

The discussion today therefore is not one based on arguing for or against profit. It is about the best way to secure profit (in the socialist sense) in the conditions of today. In the recent past profit and loss were calculated on the degree to which the production plans were fulfilled. This was related to the old plans of economic direction and planning. An essential part of the changes in economic management which have been discussed and decided, is the proposition that profit shall be calculated not solely on the amount produced in relation to its cost, but also in relation to its realisation (sale) to the consumers, and that profit should be used even more as an incentive to higher production.

Profit and Incentive

This brings us to one last aspect of the differences between profit under the two systems. One essential result for a factory making a profit in the Soviet Union is an *automatic* bonus for all the workers, technicians, management personnel of the factory concerned, for the distribution of some part of profit in this way is regarded as a basic element—an incentive—for increasing production. It is legally binding on all enterprises to allocate a fixed percentage of profits as "incentive bonus" to be distributed to all those responsible for making it.

Professor Liberman, one of the originators of the ideas which have led to these changes, sums it all up admirably:

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"In the U.S.S.R. one cannot increase profit through speculation, arbitrary raising of prices, non-equivalent exchange with backward and colonial countries or exerting pressure on the wage levels of the workers.

"Profit in the Soviet Union, if prices correctly reflect the average cost of production in the particular industry, is the monetary expression of the growth of social labour productivity. That is why we can offer incentives based on profitability for real efficiency of production. But here such encouragement is not enrichment. In our country profit cannot grow over into capital for no-one . . . can privately acquire any means of production with their bonus. . . . How can one talk of 'market economy' if centralised planning remains in force. . . .

"Our aim is not to introduce capitalist 'enterprise' but to promote the initiative of our workers, engineers and managers and to encourage such initiative on the basis of the socialist law—'Higher pay for better work'." (*Pravda*, September 20th, 1964.)

The Dialogue on Marxism

Eric Hobsbawm

(*Opening statement at a Discussion Conference organised by the Marx Memorial Library, October 31, 1965*)

THE purpose of my talk is to start discussion on the basis of two questions: why is Marxism flourishing today? and how is it flourishing today? You may say that both these beg another question, namely: Is it flourishing today? Well, is it? The answer must be yes and no. Marxist socialist movements are on the whole not particularly successful at the moment, and the international Communist movement is split, and thus greatly weakened.

It may be that this is to some extent offset by the tendency of other movements, such as those of national and social liberation in many of the emerging countries, to draw closer to Marxism, to learn from it, perhaps even to accept it as the basis of their theoretical analysis. It may also be that the present phase is temporary. Nevertheless, the general picture of the international labour movement today by no means encourages a state of euphoria.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt whatever that the intellectual appeal of Marxism, and I should add the intellectual vitality of Marxism, has increased quite remarkably in the past ten years or so. This applies inside and outside Communist Parties, inside and outside countries of strong Marxist labour movements. It applies, for instance, to some extent among students and other intellectuals in countries like West Germany and the USA, in which Marxist political organisations are either illegal, or negligible, or both. If you want a rough measure of it, you can find it in the number and circulation of various openly Marxist books, which is much greater today, I fancy, than it was say in the 1930s, even at the height of the Left Book Club.

You can also find it in the general respect for Marx and Marxism which exists in certain fields of academic work, such as history and sociology, though this does not mean that Marx, while respected, is also accepted. I think there can be no doubt that we are at present living through a period when Marxism is flourishing, though Marxist labour movements may not always be.

What is strange about this situation is that in the developed capitalist countries it occurs during a period of unexampled prosperity, and what is more, and after the major Marxist organisations—the Communist parties—were fairly heavily discredited intellectually by the revelations of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The situation during the last major advance of Marxism, in the 1930s and 1940s, was quite different, Marxism advanced because capitalism was obviously in crisis, quite possibly, as many thought, its final crisis, because it was in a political crisis, as shown by the advance of fascism and war, because Communists were the best anti-fascists, and lastly, because of the direct appeal of the Soviet Union. And Marxism consequently advanced overwhelmingly in the form of a strengthening of Communist parties.

The most popular Marxist case against capitalism was that it would not work; against liberal bourgeois democracy, that it was ceasing to exist, being replaced by fascism. I do not say that this was all of the Marxist analysis, but it was certainly the part which struck home most immediately. None of these three powerful arguments operate very strongly today in the developed capitalist countries.

Why then did Marxism not merely survive, but

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in many ways *revive* in the past ten years? Clearly the first conclusion is, that its strength does not depend on such elementary failures of capitalism as mass unemployment and economic collapse. Of course in countries where the case against capitalism (in the form of imperialism or neo-imperialism) remains obvious, where starvation and misery are widespread, the arguments for Marxism are much simpler. But just because they are not so simple in Britain and France as in Peru and India, I am in this talk concentrating on the situation in the advanced capitalist countries.

Traditional Marxist Analysis

Yet having established that Marxism flourishes today, we must nevertheless look at the peculiar situation in which its revival is taking place. Not to beat about the bush, just because it is so entirely different from that of the 1930s and 1940s, a *general* trend towards Marxism is combined with a disintegration of the traditional Marxist analysis. In the years immediately after the war attempts were still being made to maintain the old arguments. Capitalist stability, it was said, was not going to last. Well, perhaps in the long view this is true, but it has certainly lasted for the best part of 20 years, which few Marxists expected. The liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples, some argued, was a sham. Well, this is certainly true in the same sense that mere political independence is not enough, and can lead to an informal type of economic domination which we now call 'neo-imperialism'. Nevertheless, it has made a fundamental difference to the political configuration of most parts of the world, which few Marxists predicted or were immediately prepared for.

The advance of socialism, most of us thought, would not necessarily be the unaided work of the Communists, but it would certainly depend on the efforts of a single united world-wide communist movement organised round the USSR. But for various reasons this single world communist movement has tended to develop tensions within it, and even to split, and our regrets do not alter the facts. Other ways of national and social liberation, perhaps even of achieving socialism, emerged in some colonial and semi-colonial countries independently of the communists, or where the communists were so weak as not to play a major role. Lastly, within Marxism itself the end of Stalinism brought a major crisis, and much rethinking. This is the setting for the 'dialogue on Marxism' which is my subject.

This dialogue therefore takes two major forms: a discussion between Marxists and non-Marxists, and a discussion between different kinds of Marxists, or rather between Marxists holding different views on various theoretical and practical topics, both within Communist Parties, between supporters of rival Communist Parties (in some rather unfortunate countries) and between communist and non-communist Marxists. None of these forms are new. For instance, until the first great split within the Marxist movements during and after World War I and the November Revolution, it was accepted that a constant process of debate was normal within the social-democratic parties.

Even the Russian Social Democratic Party did not actually split organisationally until just before World War I, though we have mistakenly learned to think of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks as separate much earlier. And, as we are now remembering, even after the Revolution discussion between widely different viewpoints on ideological and practical matters was accepted as normal in the Soviet Communist Party and the international communist movement until, certainly, around 1930. Still, for a generation—say from 1930 to 1956—the dialogue of Marxism atrophied.

This applies both to the dialogue between Marxists and non-Marxists and between different views within Marxism. As for the non-Marxists, we were very keen to confront them, to tell them what Marxism was, to expound and propagate it, to polemise against its adversaries. But we did not believe that there was anything we could learn from them ourselves. A conversation in which one partner is expected to listen and the other not, is not a dialogue. The terms in which we spoke of such confrontations reflected this. We spoke of the 'battle of ideas', of 'partisanship' in intellectual discussion, even—at the peak of sectarianism in the early 1950s—of 'bourgeois' versus 'proletarian' science.[1]

Increasingly we eliminated all elements other than those of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin or what had been accepted as orthodox in the USSR: any theories of art other than 'socialist realism', any psychology other than Pavlov's, even at times any biology other than Lysenko's. Hegel was pushed out of Marxism, as in the Short History of the CPSU, even Einstein roused suspicions, not to mention 'bourgeois' social science as a whole. The more unconvincing our own official beliefs were, the less we could afford a dialogue, and it is interesting that we spoke more often of the 'defence' of Marx-

[1] A French communist philosopher and critic has written as follows of this period: "In our philosophic memory we recall this as the time of the intellectuals in arms, pursuing error into all its hiding-places, as the time when we philosophers wrote no books, but turned every book into politics, and cut the world—arts, literature, philosophy, science—with a single blade into the pitiless blocs of class division."

(L. Althusser, *Pour Marx*, Paris 1965, p. 12).

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ism than of its power to penetrate. And of course this was natural. How could we discuss, say, the history of the USSR, if we left Trotsky out of it, or thought of *him* as a foreign agent? At most we could write books and reviews proving to ourselves that we need not listen to those who took a different view.

After Stalin

After Stalin it became increasingly clear that this would not do, and for two reasons. First, because it deprived socialism itself of important tools of research and planning, as notably in economics and the social sciences. (One of the ironies of the situation was, that some of the economic ideas which we deprived ourselves of had actually been developed by Marxists in Russia during the 1920s, for instance much of the modern theory of economic development and the techniques of planning and national accounting). Second, because we largely deprived ourselves of Marxism as a means of propaganda. People might well, as during the war in resistance movements, join Communist parties for class reasons or because they were the best fighters against Hitler. They might then *become* Marxists, and our very effective methods of education helped them to do so. But very few people after the 1930s became communists because of the scientific power of Marx's ideas.

As for the discussion between different kinds of Marxists, for a generation this hardly occurred because it hardly seemed to arise. Most Marxists were Communists: in or very close to the Communist Parties. Those who were not, were—or seemed—negligible, and indeed were often unknown, because they represented no important movements. And we vaguely assumed that those who were no longer Communists, or who had at one time or another parted company with Lenin, had either ceased to be Marxists then, or had somehow never been 'real' Marxists. We begged a lot of questions in this way, but they did not seem to be important questions. Plekhanov, for instance, was the father of Marxism in Russia and we read some of him with admiration, as Lenin had done. We did not read those writings of his which didn't agree with Lenin, because they were not available, and even had they been (like Kautsky's later writings), we would—I think understandably—have judged that they must be wrong, because he himself had been so obviously proved wrong by history. Conversely, we assumed that all those who wrote under the auspices of the Communist Party were Marxists, which is by no means inevitable. We were wrong on both counts.

In Britain the impossibility of maintaining this attitude became obvious after 1956, when a high proportion of Marxist intellectuals left the Communist Party. It was obviously impossible to argue seriously that, say, Christopher Hill stopped being a Marxist historian at the moment when he stopped holding a party card, implausible to argue that he had never been a Marxist, and meaningless to argue that he had left the Party because at some stage in the past he had stopped being a Marxist without telling anyone about it including himself. We had to learn to live with the fact that the Marxist intellectuals who were in the Communist Party were only a part—and not as in the past the overwhelming majority—of the intellectuals who called themselves Marxists.

The development of different trends within the communist movement made the old assumption even less tenable. It is quite true that a number of ex-Communists also became ex-Marxists and indeed anti-Marxists in due course, as had always happened, and this seemed to justify the old attitude. But equally, and especially in the past ten years, we have found plenty of non-Marxists becoming Marxists (or calling themselves Marxists) without ever joining, or wanting to join, the Communist Party. In fact today it is impossible to make the simple statement on which many of us were brought up: There is one and only one 'correct' Marxism and it is to be found in Communist Parties.

This does not mean that there is no 'correct' Marxism. Only, it cannot be any longer institutionally defined, and it is by no means as easy to know what in any instance it is, as we once thought. In saying that the discussion is open among Marxists I am not saying that on any point it can never conclude, though I think I would say that discussion on *some* points (not always the same) must go on indefinitely, because Marxism is a scientific method, and in the sciences discussion—and discussion between people holding different views on the basis of science—is the only and permanent method of progress. Each problem solved simply produces more problems for further discussion.

But what I am also saying is that *at present* opening questions is much more important than closing them, even if it were easier to close them than seems likely just now. I may suspect—and I do suspect—that a lot of the people now calling themselves Marxist aren't, and a lot of theories being put forward under Marxist auspices are very far from Marx. But this applies to Marxists in Communist Parties or in socialist countries just as much as to Marxists outside both. And anyway, we must also ask ourselves which is at present more important, to define what Marxism isn't—which will sooner or later sort itself out anyway—or to discover, or rediscover what it is. I think it is the latter, certainly that is the more difficult task.

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Rethinking and Rediscovering

For much of Marxism must be rethought and rediscovered, and not only by communists. The post-Stalin period has not answered questions, it has asked them. If I may quote a French communist intellectual: "Those who impute to Stalin not only his crimes and faults, but also all our disappointments of all kinds, may well find themselves disconcerted by the discovery that the end of philosophic dogmatism has not given us back Marxist philosophy. . . . It has produced a genuine freedom for research, but also a sort of fever. Some people have rushed to call philosophy what is only the ideological commentary on their feeling of liberation and on their taste for freedom. But temperatures go down as surely as stones thrown into the air. What the end of dogmatism has done is to give us back the right to make an exact inventory of our intellectual possessions, to name both our wealth and our poverty, to think out and to formulate in public our problems, and to set about the rigorous task of real research." (L. Althusser, *Pour Marx*, Paris 1965, p. 21).

Communists increasingly realise that what they learned to believe and to repeat was not just 'Marxism', but Marxism as developed by Lenin, as frozen, simplified and sometimes distorted under Stalin in the USSR. That 'Marxism' is not a body of finished theories and discoveries, but a process of development: that Marx's own thought for instance went on developing throughout his life. That Marxism doubtless has potential answers, but often no actual answers to the specific problems we face, partly because the situation has changed since Marx or Lenin, partly because neither of them may actually have said anything about certain problems which existed in their time, and are important to us.

Non-communist Marxists must learn that the errors, oversimplifications and distortions of the Stalin period, or even of the entire period of the Communist International, do not mean that no valuable and important contributions were made to Marxism in this period and in the international communist movement. There are no shortcuts to Marxism; neither the appeal to Lenin against Stalin, or to Marx, or to the young Marx against the older Marx. There is only hard, and long, and in the present circumstances perhaps inconclusive, work.

Fortunately all this is widely recognised today and the work is going on. To mention only the very striking revitalisation of theory within communist parties. This has been most impressive in recent years, both inside and outside socialist countries, though it has been held up by the reluctance of older cadres, whose career was identified with Stalinism, to admit their mistakes or the mistakes they were associated with. (This is particularly marked in the field of the history of the communist movements themselves. With the exception of the Italian Communist Party, which has encouraged the frank and self-critical analysis of its own history and that of the USSR, I can think of no Communist Party which has written a scientifically acceptable history of itself—certainly neither the French nor the Soviet Party—and several, such as ours, which has shied away from the task of writing its history at all.)[2]

There is still in many Communist Parties a great deal of what might be called darning holes in socks. For instance, Roger Garaudy's phrase 'realism without limits' does not face the question whether the aesthetic theories we used to accept as Marxist are valid or not; it merely allows us to admire Kafka, or Joyce, or other people who used to be taboo in the heyday of "socialist realism" by pretending that they are 'realists' too in some indefinable sense. There is even in Communist Parties, particularly in Eastern Europe, a tendency to go in for simple empiricism and to cover the results by saying 'of course we are Marxists'.

I think, and I have the authority of the late Oscar Lange for thinking so, that some of the recent innovations in Soviet economic theory are not—or not yet—Marxist, but simply the insertions of bits of liberal economic theory such as marginal utility analysis into the great holes left open for so many years by the failure of Soviet economists to do their job. This is the sort of thing which is rightly criticised by the Chinese, though I confess that their own solution, which seems to me to be that of going back to the simple primary-school Marxism of the old days, is in its way just as much an evasion of the real problems of analysis.

Theoretical Activity

Nevertheless, there is real and lively theoretical activity. For instance, one of the most promising signs is the revival of discussion of Marx' so-called asiatic mode of production which has been going on since about 1960 in France, Hungary, the GDR, Britain, Czechoslovakia, Japan, Egypt and several other countries, and since 1964 also in the USSR and even—though critically—in China. For we must remember that this concept of Marx was abandoned by the international communist movement between 1928 (when the Chinese criticised it) and the early 1930s (when it was banned in the USSR) and has since been beyond the theoretical pale.[3]

[2] I am not underestimating the genuine efforts at self-critical analysis of works like Palme Dutt's *Three Internationals*. But they certainly do not go as far as it is possible and necessary to go today.

[3] For a survey of these discussions see *La Pensée*, April 1964 and August 1965.

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What is the nature of this discussion today? It is, obviously, about the applicability of the Marxist analysis to the world today; or rather, since it plainly cannot be applied literally in the old form, about the modifications in the analysis which must be made to fit the world today.[4] And the 'world today' must include the socialist as well as the non-socialist world. There has been very little Marxist analysis of that. In political terms this means it is about the perspectives for the victory of socialism in non-socialist countries and of its further development in socialist ones. This implies, but does not exhaust, the discussion of a number of more theoretical problems. It is evident that some of these have no very direct or discernible relevance to immediate or any other politics, though this was not always recognised. For instance, whether we finally decide that the history of China at some time in the past can be analysed in terms of Marx's 'asiatic mode' or not, it will make no difference to the policies of the Chinese Communist Party now or in the future. But though a distinction between the theoretical and practical aspects of these debates can be made, in reality they can't be sharply separated.

Politically, it seems to me that the major problem in non-socialist countries is that of how many and what different roads there are to socialism. Since the October revolution there has been a tendency to assume that there was basically at any time only one, though with local variations. The centralised organisation of the world communist movement as well as its later domination by the CPSU only emphasised this rigidity. It still haunts the Soviet-Chinese discussions. Now two observations must be made, of which one poses fewer problems for Marxists than the other. The first is that, quite obviously, the road to socialism cannot be the same in, say, Britain and Brazil, or its perspectives equally bright or gloomy in Switzerland as in Colombia. The task of Marxists is to divide the countries of the world into realistic groupings and to analyse the very different conditions of progress in each group properly, without trying to impose any uniformity (such as 'peaceful transition' or 'insurrection') on all of them. This is not so difficult in principle, but as it involves jettisoning a lot of past analyses and policies, it is not so easy in practice.

Much more difficult is to recognise that ways of progress to liberation and even socialism may have developed, in which the traditional Communist parties or labour movements play only a subordinate part. I am thinking here of cases such as Cuba, Algeria, Ghana and perhaps others. Or in more general terms, to ask ourselves whether our ideas of the role of communist parties in the advance to socialism may not have to be rethought in certain cases. For instance, as a current discussion in the Italian C.P. suggests, whether the split between social-democratic and communist parties which arose after 1914 is any longer justifiable in certain countries today. In posing such questions, or rather in stating that they *are* being posed, I am not giving or even suggesting any answers. I am merely saying that such problems are no longer avoidable by closing our eyes to their existence.

Within the socialist world (and insofar as we think about future socialism in non-socialist countries), several problems are also posed, whether we like it or not, by reality. They are economic problems, such as the best agrarian policy in such countries (given the rather striking failures of most of them in this field), of the best ways of economic planning, allocation of resources and goods, etc. They are political problems such as the best forms of organising the institutions of such countries (given the very striking drawbacks of such institutions in many of them). They are problems of bureaucracy, of democracy, or freedom of expression, etc. They are also, alas, international problems, as the difficult relations between different socialist states show only too clearly; including above all (as Togliatti pointed out in his Memorandum) of the role of nationalism in socialist countries. Here again, in stating that the problems exist, I am not implying any answers to them. If I imply anything, it is that the answers must not be begged by phrases such as that such things are due to hangovers from the pre-socialist past, that they are due to revisionism or dogmatism, or that they would all disappear if things were 'liberalised'.

All these problems imply theoretical discussion, and in some cases the willingness to break with long-established attitudes (as Lenin for one always was), or to enter entirely new territory. We are not used to this, so much so that we forget that Marxists have done so in the past. For instance, after the October revolution in Russia they had to enter a territory virtually unsurveyed by Marx, except in a few very general sentences, namely the problem of economic development in backward countries. And because they did so, Marxism is today a genuine world movement, for after all, what gives it its most obvious appeal in the world today is, the analysis of the imperialist phase of capitalism, which is very much post-Marx, and the discovery of ways of turning backward countries into modern ones,

[4] Anyone who has any doubts on this score should read again so typical a Marxist statement of the 1930s as John Strachey's *Why you should be a Socialist*, or of the early 1950s as Palme Dutt's *Crisis of Britain*, or for that matter Kuusinen's *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*.

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which is the major theoretical discovery of the Soviet Marxists in the 1920s. Moreover, some of these things also bring us back to the dialogue between Marxists and non-Marxists, for they involve learning from the achievements of non-Marxist scientists. It is irrelevant that, if Marxism had not ossified, it would itself have kept abreast and no doubt ahead of the best achievements of science. In many ways it did not, and we must now learn as well as teach.

Conclusion

This brings me to my conclusion. We are in a situation in which Marxism is splintered, both politically and theoretically. We must, for the foreseeable future, learn to live with it. It is no good regretting the days when it wasn't. We are in a situation where Marxism has to catch up in two ways. It has to liquidate the heritage of the sort of intellectual ice-age through which it passed (which does not mean that it should automatically reject everything that was said and done during that age), and we have to absorb all that is best in the sciences since we stopped serious thinking on the subject. I am deliberately using brutal terms, for they need to be used. We must ask as well as explain; above all we must ask ourselves. We must be prepared to be wrong. We must stop pretending to have all the answers, because we obviously haven't. And more than anything else, we must learn again to use Marxism as a scientific method.

This we have not done. We have persistently done two things which are incompatible with any scientific method; and we have done them not just since the later days of Stalin, but earlier. First, we have known the answers and just confirmed them by research; second we have confused theory and political debate. Both are deadly. We said for instance "We know the transition from feudalism to capitalism proceeds by revolution everywhere," because Marx says so, and because if there weren't, then history might not after all proceed by revolutions but by gradualism and the social democrats might be right. Therefore our research will show (a) that the revolution of the 1640s in Britain was bourgeois; (b) that before it we were a feudal country; and (c) that thereafter we were a capitalist country. I don't say that the conclusions were wrong, though (b) seems to me to be most doubtful; but this was no way of arriving at them. For just suppose that the facts don't check with the conclusions, then we simply said, to hell with the facts.

There are historical reasons why we said so, going back to before 1914, but they don't concern us at this moment. And whether or not the facts will suit communists or social-democrats has nothing to do with Marxism. The fact that the conditions of the British working-class are not absolutely deteriorating throughout history suits liberals and social-democrats but not revolutionaries. We would be fools and not Marxists if for this reason we denied it. Marxism is a tool for changing the world *by knowledge*, which we as politicians then use. It is not a means of scoring debating points in politics. Many of our most talented older communists have wasted much of their time as writers of Marxist theory by failing to observe this distinction.

We must go back to Marxism as a scientific method. Perhaps the most promising sign of the present world—and British—situation, which is otherwise not very promising, is that more and more Marxists are going back to it in this way. And the proof of what can be achieved is the fact that socialism, based on Marxism, has made most progress in the world even at the period when Marxism did its best to make itself ineffective.

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The Traditional Societies of Tropical Africa

Jean Suret-Canale

(*Extracts from his article in* La Pensée, *No. 117*)

HOW can one characterise the societies in pre-colonial Black Africa in a Marxist perspective—that is to say, in an approach of true scientific synthesis? Pre-colonial tropical Africa presents three essential types of modes of production, which we may briefly characterise as follows:

(a) The Primitive Community

This is a type of society rigorously excluding all exploitation of man by man, owing to the extremely low level of the productive forces. The primitive community is founded on dependence on food-gathering and hunting as the means of existence. These means do not allow men to dispose of resources exceeding the strict minimum necessary to ensure their subsistence. In those conditions there exists no surplus that one individual could appropriate at the expense of others—therefore there is no *possibility* of exploitation of man by man; no possibility of the differentiation of society into antagonistic classes.

This type of society is in the process of disappearance in Black Africa, and in the 19th Century only existed in vestigial form: one finds—or found—it in the Negrilles or Pygmies of the Equatorial Forests, and the Bushmen of Saan of South Africa. The latter, driven back into the semi-desert, are in process of extinction. As for the Pygmies, for many years their activity has been integrated with those of the surrounding African societies with whom they practise regular exchanges in the framework of a true division of labour. It is highly probable that it is this situation which explains the relative poverty of their culture compared to that of the Amerindians, Melanesians or Australian populations of a comparable level of material civilisation.

The precarious nature of their living conditions forces them to form "hunting bands" (generally corresponding to a part of a clan: a group of relations exceeding the limit of the conjugal family). These hunting bands remain small in number: the scarcity of resources works against large concentrations. However, these conditions of life presuppose also a close solidarity. The product of hunting or food-gathering of each individual guarantees the subsistence of all.

The egalitarian nature of the society (on the level of *consumption*); the "communism" in the organisation of the foodgathering or hunting, is imposed by the low level of the productive forces. This level varies greatly according to the environment. Within the limits imposed by more or less oppressive natural conditions, the *forms of organisation* are extremely varied, and can comprise a very large element of individualism.

One might even suggest that in principle this element of individualism is generally much greater than that allowed the exploited sections of class society.

However, while on this subject, let us clear up certain misunderstandings which have caused many ethnologists to deny the existence of the *primitive community* and of *primitive communism*. Arbitrarily extending to primitive societies conceptions borrowed from different social formations—whether from the doubtful "community" of certain rural regions of Europe, or even from the Kolkhoz—they can see nothing similar in primitive societies, and reject the term "primitive communist" as a Marxist intervention. They can only maintain such a position by investing the notion of "primitive communism" with an implicit content Marxists have never given it. The only definition one can give to these societies is that they do not comprise, and cannot comprise, the exploitation of man by man or antagonistic classes by virtue of the weakness of the level of the productive forces. Human antheaps, slum barracks, are specific features of *class society*.[1] There is nothing more mistaken than to imagine these primitive peoples as deprived of individuality.

(b) Tribal or Tribo-Patriarchal Society

All African societies have passed this stage and are based on a more developed level of productive

[1] And such features as still subsist in socialist society are an inheritance from class society, having nothing to do with either primitive communism or the communism of tomorrow!

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forces: *agriculture* and *stock-raising* as an adjunct constitute the essential elements of social production.

Cultivation by hoe is carried out on large areas of burnt earth, often very extensive, and comprising large fallow areas. The implements—hoe, axe, hunting-knife—are in iron.[2]

The technical details and the regional variants are here of little importance: the essential thing to realise is that the *generalisation of agricultural activity* (or *pastoral*: the two are generally separated) resulted in a considerable increase in productivity creating an economic surplus over and above the strict minimum essential for survival. It is the existence of this surplus or excess which permits the division of labour, the advent of specialised occupations which themselves are a source of increased productivity—the advent also of commerce. This excess may be kept in reserve for a bad harvest or other disaster, or may be consumed at feasts, etc. It can also be appropriated, "embezzled" by certain individuals or families, to the detriment of the community. Thus becomes possible the differentiation between rich and poor, and hence the exploitation of the masses by the minority. The fundamental social unit is here the *patriarchal family*, a group related through the maternal or the paternal line, and corresponding to a subdivision of the actual clan.

In the same way as the "hunting band", this group always in fact comprises people who are technically outsiders to the clan: (wives, occasionally sons-in-law). As the fundamental economic unit of agricultural production, it is not in the strict sense of the term a group of kinsmen, but is understood as a subdivision of the actual clan by its members: the foreign elements being seen as mere guests who may at any moment return to their own group of kinsmen, yet who are at the same time nevertheless indispensable for the true existence of social life.

There is no private ownership of the land in the sense of the term in Roman or common law. The right of ownership and exploitation of the land is collective and inalienable, and belongs to the patriarchal family. It is based on the original occupation of the land (and, for cultivated or cultivable districts, on the original working of the land). Except for a few completely uninhabitable areas, whether the land is fallow or cultivated, pastureland or forest, it is apportioned out, and the limits between the various domains well established and well known—which is not to say, of course, that there are no disputes over the attribution, or the boundaries.

[2] But initially implements in stone or wood (usually anterior to the era of Christianity): and one of the very largest and most difficult questions for African archaeology is the question of how the use of iron implements was diffused and generalised in the field of agriculture.

Within the limits of the family, it is the senior of the eldest generation; the "patriarch" or family chief, who shares out the land. It is he who is responsible for the fertility of the land (or of the abundance of game in the hunting grounds) and he alone has the right to accomplish the necessary rites, and because of this privilege must occasionally bow to highly inconvenient prohibitions.

Without underestimating the religious (or magic) elements of this function, it is important not to underestimate on the other hand its purely technical aspects. Within an agricultural system comprising long fallow periods where at any one time only a very small percentage of the agricultural land is actually under cultivation, the periodical redistribution of the land is a necessity. This redistribution must conform to the conditions imposed by the agricultural system—(the rotation of crops)—and also to purely social conditions: certain areas remain "collective" or "in the family", and must be worked for the benefit of the community, while others are "individual". The number of work days in the week which must be spent on the collective and individual fields is laid down by custom, and varies according to the ethnic groups: in this way the size of the fields is also determined.

Often the patriarchal family is isolated and autonomous—the "encampments" of the forest region, the "soukkalas" of the Sudan regions often constitute both socio-economic units and isolated dwelling units, politically independent.

Often, however, the dwelling unit and the political unit is the *village*. Other families come to associate themselves with the "founding" family (that of the first exploiters) and come to be accepted as guests. It is the role of the patriarch of the founding family to share out the lands, not only within the frame of his own family, but between the different families associating with him. He is the "land chief" of the village. Sometimes, besides him there exists in a "specialised family" a "water chief" who fulfils the same function for the fishing rights. The levies he demands, or the benefits that are his privileges have both a religious significance and a material compensation for the tasks he discharges. In the gold-bearing regions there existed in the same way a "gold chief" for whom the gold nuggets (reputed to be unlucky) were reserved, while the ordinary mortals had to content themselves with the gold dust. This system can often function within an egalitarian and democratic framework inherited from the "primitive commune". It obviously occurs in most cases where the agriculture yields only a low productivity and forms but a small fraction of the revenue.

This was generally the case of the populations of the equatorial forest, where the initial exploitation

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of the land was difficult, and where it was a constant struggle to prevent the reconquest of the land by the jungle. Here agricultural nomadism is frequent: the population is sparse and often scattered in "encampments" corresponding to a single patriarchal family—and this isolation hinders the diffusion of techniques. The typical features of *plantation* agriculture (fruit, vegetables and tubers) do not make it necessary to store the surplus in reserve stocks which could easily be appropriated. It is this civilisation which J. J. Maquet has called the "civilisation of the clearings". However, it would be erroneous to deduce from this a "geographical determinism" which would not correspond to the facts. Even though many forest peoples are indeed at this level, it was in the forest environment (in origin at least) that the class society, the states and the civilisation of the Benin grew up.

On the other hand, this relatively democratic and essentially stateless organisation has remained that of numerous peoples of the plains, who are mostly excellent cereal cultivators—M. Maquet takes many examples from the Kissi of the so-called forest regions of Guinea, who are remarkable rice growers, but who have long since reduced the forest which formerly covered the region to mere vestiges which now constitute the "sacred woods" where the young men receive their initiation.

Equally there are numerous Sudan tribes (dubbed "paleonogritic" by the ethnologists) who have the same characteristics, but who are most definitely *not* forest peoples: the Coniagui and Bassari of the Senegalo-Guinea borders, the Dogon of the Bandiagara cliffs, the Lobi of the High Volta, the Kabri and the Somba from the Atakova, and the "Kirdi" of the North Cameroons.

The development of productivity, the importance of the surplus, create the possibility of exploitation and of class differentiation, but by no means inevitably or automatically. Many varied circumstances, bound up with historical development, render possible the survival of the ancient social structures within the most varied geographical environments.

Social Differentiation

Let us now examine how social differentiation can be introduced into "stateless societies".

As soon as a *surplus* is created, slavery becomes possible. Originally the war captive, if he escaped being put to death, was incorporated in the victorious group. Where the productivity is low, his condition—rights and duties—differs hardly at all from those of the other members of the patriarchal family to which he has been annexed. He simply constitutes for the group a supplementary work-force. But if the level of productivity is high, the status of the "captive"—to quote the traditional African terminology—becomes that of an exploited person. He will be given the strict minimum necessary for his upkeep—all the surplus he creates is confiscated for the family collective. Concretely, the individual field assigned to him will be small, and the number of working days he is allowed to spend on it reduced to the minimum.

On the level of the *family*, the hierarchy originally based on seniority of presence in the village, may be overtaken, or entirely destroyed, by a hierarchy founded on wealth. Wealth lends prestige, and hence authority. The classic studies of M. Georges Balandier have brought to light the role of the "Bilaba" among the Fang tribe—a sort of competition of exchange of wealth which closely resembles the "potlarch" so beloved by scholars of the Durkheimer school. The Kings of Dahomey were supposed originally to have founded the pre-eminence of their family by the banquets they gave to neighbouring and rival tribes.

Finally, on the level of the patriarchal family of the village or perhaps even of more widespread religious or military groupings[3], we see the exploitation arising when the man holding the position of land chief or war chief,[4] encouraged by the rewards and privileges pertaining to him through the *division of labour*, is led first to enrich himself and the families of whom he is the chief, and finally to appropriate collective property for his own use, thus becoming an exploiter. The exploitation may be collective when it comprises tribute paid by one population to another which demands it as original tenant of the soil, or on the contrary when it is exacted by right of conquest.

Between egalitarian society and class society one finds all possible levels of transition—among the Fang of the Cameroons and Gabon, slavery was apparently unknown at the beginning of their migration: among the Massangou from the Chaillu Hills (Gabon), the prisoners of war were only kept to replace those killed. These slaves were incorporated into the families: it was only if they were unco-operative that they were sold. Here we are still very close to the primitive community.

Among the Kissi of the Guinea forest there exists neither state nor chiefs: the village constituted the ultimate political unit. But patriarchal slavery was widespread, and certain war chiefs, working for their own profit, exercised a *de facto* authority by

[3] The war chief is initially chosen for his military qualities in war campaigns, but afterwards becomes an ordinary cultivator. The two positions of war chief and land chief may be held by the same person.

[4] These groupings are of a military or religious character, and are very loosely bound together, only sporadically coming into action.

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virtue of the bands they had established from captured slaves, and from the wealth they had accumulated.

In the Agni and Baoule districts of the Ivory Coast the family chiefs and the village headman have above them a complete hierarchy fulfilling both military and religious functions. This hierarchy was perhaps inherited from the military organisation so vital to their migration from the Ashanti district to their present-day habitat: it consists of deputy chiefs, chiefs of divisions of the tribe with the king, the tribal chief, at the head. The actual powers of the king, severely controlled by the council of chiefs, are limited. However, here one can see an embryo of State power, especially in its *judiciary* role—it acts as an arbiter of quarrels and thus avoids the resort to private wars and quarrels, but there exist almost no means of coercion, and the respect given to its decisions are a measure of its moral authority.

To resume, at the stage of social development which we have just described, *the state of the productive forces* (based on *agriculture*, on the initial forms of the *division of labour*) allow the creation of a *surplus*. But the social organisation, the frame of the productive activities, remains an inheritance of the former era, that of the *patriarchal or village community*, and remains close to that of the primitive collective.

However, varied forms of social differentiation arise and develop in greater or lesser degree according to the state of the productive forces, geographical conditions, historical circumstances, etc. But the appearance of these internal contradictions has not yet given rise to the emergence of the *State*.

This tribal or tribo-patriarchal society may be considered as typical of the *transition* from the primitive community to class society.

However, we feel it constitutes a *mode of production* unique in its association of a certain level of *productive forces* and particular and definite *productive relations*.

(c) Class Societies

Now to consider the clearly defined class societies. Avoiding once more the error of excessive geographical determinism, it is unquestionable that the environment of the Savannahs—with its cereal agriculture, and the necessity (imposed by the seasonal rhythm of the climate) of laying in reserves, together with the increased communications, exchange and diffusion of techniques that this necessitates—lends itself particularly well to the intensification of social antagonisms.

The surplus, the excess, is particularly significant because it may consist of cereals or dry vegetables (pod plants) which can be preserved almost indefinitely, are easily transportable, easy to measure out, and present a sufficient uniformity for different quantities to be compared. These characteristics allow a certain fluid accumulation of wealth. Thus the surplus may easily be separated from the producer; pass from one individual to another and finally be concentrated in relatively large quantities.

Thus, above the patriarchal families (including their slaves) and the villages, which remain the *organisms of production* and the base of the social edifice, we see appearing an *aristocracy*, a *privileged class* (based on noble birth or functions) whose prerogative and way of life recall those of the feudal lords of our Middle Ages (though this is only an analogy).

Is There An African Feudal System?

That there exists a feudal mode of production is a point agreed on both by Marxists and many others, although its definition and limits still remain to be defined. The social hierarchy to which it gives rise is based on bonds between individuals: the hierarchy of land rights which arises under feudalism concerns private, personal rights. Doubtless the German tradition has also introduced traces of the conception of inherited collectivity, but Roman law (supported by the Church, directly interested in possible acquisitions) took over in the sense that the holder of landed property and fiefs could give them up and hand them on without any possible interference by the family collective of which he is a member.

Now, all those who use the expression "African feudalism" emphasise that for them this term has an exclusively political meaning. J. J. Maquet expressly states that for him the term of feudalism can only apply in Africa to "*an ensemble of political institutions*". Other authors also, in the very title of their works, lay the same emphasis on the political character of African institutions which they designate as "feudal".

Now, neither vassal bonds or any other links between individuals, nor the dues or forced labour demanded by the lord, are sufficient to characterise the feudal mode of production. Engels wrote as early as 1882 that "Certain slavery and enforced labour for an overlord are not specifically mediaeval or feudal characteristics—we see this everywhere—or nearly everywhere where a conqueror forces the former inhabitants to work the land for his own benefit."

The basis of the feudal mode of production is small peasant economy and independent artisan enterprise. There is nothing of that in Africa.

Indeed, what *is* the actual form of the exploitation of the masses by the aristocracies here? The privileged sections appropriate for themselves part

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of the product or the working time of the villagers, in ways and means originally intended to pay collective dues and debts, in particular for the upkeep of the specialised individuals, the land chiefs.

The function of the family or village collectives as the framework of production is not changed: the collective field or fields merely become in part those of the chief or chiefs, and are used to supply the tax in kind (the most common form in Africa). Various other levies whose significance was religious as much as economic—(lifting of a prohibition, the responsibility for which is assumed by the chief beneficiary of the privileges)—disappear to become exploitation pure and simple.

The religious powers and traditional functions of the chief serve to cloak the introduction of exploitation, which still retains the same forms when these powers are extended by military force to neighbouring groups, or when they are founded on force alone: alongside the "traditional" chiefs and kings are parvenus, heads of bands who have won authority by armed force.

The system of exploitation does not change in essence, whatever the origin of the power. The masses are exploited not so much as individuals but as members of a collectivity—usually a village.

In these societies village organisation becomes the rule because it constitutes a useful frame for the levy of tribute, dues and taxes. The village chief assumes the responsibility of sharing out the burden among his subjects, and is answerable—as is the village collectivity—for the payment.

The burden of this discipline and the collective obligation that weighs on the tribe is far from being a heritage of "primitive communism", and results on the contrary from the integration of the community in a social system comprising class exploitation.

The colonists have taken over this useful system of exploitation for their own ends, and they have even striven (more or less successfully) to extend it to tribal societies where it has never existed. Thus tribal heads of village or canton come into existence in regions where they were unknown before, and at the same time the regroupment into villages was imposed on a scattered population, to facilitate the levying of taxes, and the organisation of forced labour (Ivory Coast and Equatorial Africa).

The exploitation also is carried out on a collective rather than a personal basis: the king in actual fact, even in the most evolved states, only uses a minor percentage of his income for strictly personal ends. The main part is used for the upkeep of his family in the patriarchal meaning of the term: his "house" which has the same structure as a normal patriarchal family but hypertrophied: as a result of polygamy, the number of "princes" (sometimes fulfilling public functions in the name of the king) increases, and often these princes as future candidates to the throne are released from all responsibilities to the benefit of other noble castes in the king's service: (witch doctors and others.) Even royal captives are sometimes employed as members of the royal house, and levy taxes, govern provinces, etc. These captives (or other profiteers who have made their way into the king's service) often form a permanent military body of troops.

When the state apparatus first appears, it is more or less identified with the "royal household" and with the privileged class (within which appear multiple nuances, varying according to the country and the ethnic groupings). When the State takes on important dimensions (and here we find the mechanism which produces the formation of "fiefs") the king will surrender to his deputies or nobles the total or partial benefit of dues coming in from certain regions and certain villages. As J. Chesneaux shows in Asia, these are known as "false" fiefs.

All these aristocratic hierarchies and the development of the state in no way alter the land ownership. Mr. Kabore, in his work on the Mossi aristocracy, writes: "Their authority is exercised over wealth and men, without extending to the land itself, which remains the property of the autochthonous collective." Although the Mossi aristocrats —the descendants of the Dagomba conquerors who came from the South in the 14th century—have completely assimilated the autochthonous population, it is the descendants of the latter who provide the land chiefs (chiefs in name only, since they are deprived of any political power whatsoever).

In the districts where the hierarchies are most developed, the condition of the "free" tributary peasant is not very much better than that of the "captive" who is not integrated in the patriarchal family. When the captives are too numerous to be integrated in the patriarchal family of the masters, they are confined to a territory (sometimes their own original land) and organised (or remain organised) in villages in the customary manner. Of course, they are no longer free, and the conqueror can appropriate "servants" as he wishes from their ranks, and their inferior social status is clearly felt, but their mode of life is not appreciably different from that of any other village community.

Briefly, chiefs or kings are never actual landlords —the land constitutes collective and inalienable property. At the very most the king may *administrate* the land by fulfilling the traditional functions of the "land chief", and thus may specify the fields which are to be cultivated for his profit. He may also grant the use of available lands (vacant or conquered) —either for his own use, or to exercise over these lands the prerogatives of land chief.

As for the lands watered by the rare and precious

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flooding of the river in Senegal, the dues have become part of the land, and take on a character of ground rent. But the principle of *collective and inalienable property* remains the same.

In the middle Niger Delta, the scarcity of cultivable lands, the waves of successive invasions and the resulting mosaic of ethnic groups with the coexistence of fixed cultivators and semi-nomadic stock breeders, has resulted in a confusion of land systems which are difficult to disentangle. But the general regime remains that of collective inalienable property. Nowhere, to our knowledge, does pre-colonial Africa provide the example of a land system based on private rights which could be qualified as feudal.

It is another thing altogether for the state created by colonisation, where the privileges of the chiefdom have been maintained and at the same time the creation of private property has been facilitated for the benefit of these chiefs. As a general rule as far as former French colonies are concerned, the main agricultural system of the savannah countries (cereal cultivation with long-term rotations) has been a considerable obstacle to the consolidation of a private land system.

Things are very different in the forest regions, however, where the creation of *plantations* favoured the establishment of private landed property. Thus, in the forest region of Guinea, the chiefs, using unpaid labour, were able to establish large coffee plantations whose produce they appropriated. The conjunction of unpaid labour and a developed system of private property has all the characteristics of a feudal society, but is here integrated into the colonial system[5].

On the Ivory Coast the same phenomenon has enabled the chiefs to establish huge plantations, but very quickly the unpaid autochthonous labour force was replaced by wage-labourers and immigrant peasant farmers—here it is no longer feudalism, but simply extensive bourgeois landed property.

In conclusion, having ourselves spoken of an African feudal system, we think it best to reject this terminology. In traditional Africa the mode of production was never "feudal", and the use of the term in a purely political sense will obviously lead to confusion[6].

Has There Existed a Slave Mode of Economy in Africa?

One cannot deny the considerable social importance of slavery in pre-colonial Africa. If the institution had not been already deeply rooted in the 15th century, European slave traders would never have been able to develop the slave trade using African intermediaries as suppliers.

Everywhere the distinction between *captive* and *free man* appears as a fundamental social cleavage. Everywhere, even in tribal societies, it is slavery that first signifies the rupture with the primitive egalitarian society. But the loss of his liberty in no way signifies that the captive assumes a precise and uniform role in social production. In most cases, the "hut captive" is incorporated in the patriarchal family, whose name he assumes: his role in social production does not differ fundamentally from the "free" youths of the family.

When a whole population has been reduced to slavery the captives are organised in patriarchal families and in villages in the habitual manner. They are more heavily exploited than the others, but the mode of exploitation remains the same: i.e. the levying of dues or organisation of slave labour under the direction of a captive chief (the chief of the enslaved village).

The great agricultural possessions worked by slave labour, or artisan workshops employing slave labour, have never been known in Africa, and have only appeared in exceptional conditions. As far as agriculture is concerned, there are only two examples to quote: (a) the use of captives by the Kings of Dahomey in the 19th century to work the plantations (the difficulties of the slave trade had made it difficult to sell these slaves in foreign markets), and (b) the plantations established in the 19th century (by Arabs) in Zanzibar and other islands of the Indian Ocean.

There were also workshops employing an abundant slave labour force in some Sudan towns working to supply merchandise for export to N. Africa, e.g. leather work in the Hausa cities. These are retrogressive or marginal cases: never the base of a mode of production of any appreciable geographical extent.

Briefly, the status of a captive, although very widely spread in Africa, implied an essentially legal content, and never indicated the pre-determined role in production which characterises a social class.

The fundamental exploited class was that of the labouring peasantry, embodying both "free" men, captives and tributaries; the dominant class was the ensemble of the aristocracies—tribal, military and civil official—and comprising also certain categories of royal "captives" discharging public functions. Here there is a clear parallel with the mediaeval "serfs", who were in no way identified with the exploited class in general, but only constituted a fraction, some among them having been able to

[5] In Kissi at least, these plantations were "nationalised" in 1958 to the benefit of the local collectives.

[6] This is not to admit that certain ethnologists are right when they reject the existence of feudal society in Africa because of the "non-existence there of antagonistic classes"!

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integrate themselves with the ruling class (serf-knights and officials).

The Economic Functions of African States

Marx was struck by the importance of the economic role of the State in the Asiatic societies; and indeed it is clear that in Egypt, India, and China, the necessity for the organisation and co-ordination of irrigation systems helped very early on to give the State a particularly vigorous structure. But, as J. Chesneaux points out, "the irrigation question has clearly not had the universal and permanent importance in the history of the Asian societies that Marx attributed to it"[7].

Here of course it still remains to elucidate Marx's actual thought on this point, for although the concept of the Asiatic mode of production constantly recurs in his work, it was never the object of systematic study.

Surely what has happened is that critics have here equated or completely confused this concept of the Asiatic *mode of production*, and the particular examples picked out by Marx in "*Asiatic Societies*" which served him as a model in elaborating this concept.

We think that F. Tokei has rightly brought out this fundamental content through its essential contradictions, i.e. that "the society defined by the Asiatic mode of production developed as a class society on the basis of collective tribal property".

Let us not forget that the economic function of the State, however important this might be in some societies, never constitutes the *essence* of that society. The essence is the *coercive role* assumed by the State to overcome social antagonisms, and to maintain the social order founded on the exploitation of man by man. But these economic functions are capable of precociously consolidating a State which would otherwise have been limited to a rather fragile superstructure, because of the underdeveloped nature of its social antagonisms.

In Africa this factor has played an important role, but in a different way. It is the influence of *trade*, and particularly the gold trade, which seems to have been the decisive element in the consolidation of the first States of tropical Africa.

What do we know of the origins of Ghana, mentioned in Arab texts from the 8th century on? The very word "Ghana"—the title of the sovereign, from which the Arab chroniclers have made the name of the country—means "war leader": the leader, presumably, of a tribal confederation. This sort of tribal confederation is common in African history, and does not originally constitute a State. The war chief probably also fulfilled the functions of the "land chief"—at all events, one prerogative was certainly reserved for him—that of the "Gold Chief" (Kaya Maghan)—one of the titles attributed to him by African tradition.

What does this title imply? The exploitation of the gold-bearing alluvia is still practised today in the upper valleys of the Senegal and the Niger, within the framework of the patriarchal community. The working of the gold mines takes place in the off-season, after the crops have been brought in. To open a working area necessitates the same ceremonies as the opening of agricultural work; and the head of the family, and above him the land chief, share out the stakes of land (literally: placer deposits).

The supreme land chief—here the "gold master" or king—had the right to the nuggets: the largest, a block of local gold of considerable size, was attached to the royal throne. The miners contented themselves with the gold dust—found indeed, in much larger quantities. Even today in the placer deposits of Siguir, the discovery of a nugget is considered a bad omen, and must be compensated for by suitable ceremonies.

Apart from the nuggets, the gold chief probably levied a tithe on the gold dust (as did all the sovereigns later ruling in these regions).

This exploitation of gold presupposes that this metal was already the object of a certain commerce: the earliest Arab manuscripts call Ghana the "land of gold". What is certain is that the contact with the Arab world gave a considerable impetus to this commerce, and that it is the gold-trade which consolidated the structure of the state in Ghana. The Arab or Berber merchants came to collect the gold at the capital, Koumbi Saleh, a twin city comprising the king's dwelling and his "household" (the royal city), and, some distance away, the commercial city, inhabited by Moslem traders. (The king and the autochthonous population was pagan.) Autochthonous merchants, ancestors of the present-day "dioulas" (migrant traders of West Africa) collected the gold from the mining area situated further to the South, and, having taken it to the capital, exchanged it for merchandise brought in by the Arab and Berber merchants (salt and copper). On these occasions the king levied taxes, and El Behvi (11th century) gives us the tariff. Here it is clear that the "war chief" obviously desired to assure the security of the transactions.

It is this economic and commercial function which seems to have played a decisive role in the origin of many States of Black Africa: Mali (which later took over the gold trade from Ghana), Gao and Karnem-Bornou.

We have much less documentation on the states

[7] J. Chesneaux: "The Asiatic Mode of Production: Research Perspectives", *La Pensée*, No. 114, April 1964.

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of the Benin (the Ife Civilisation) who have left no written account of their development before the 15th century. However, their works of art (bronzes and brasses) witness to the importance of the commerce of which they were the outcome, since the copper used for them was *imported.*

All these States of West Africa obviously were based on the conjunction of a tribal confederation (with a king or war chief at its head) and a market whose security is guaranteed by the king, and from which the king draws most of his revenue. The capital is at the same time the royal residence and a city-cum-market.

It seems clear that all the States of the African coast of the Indian Ocean (the Zendj referred to by Arab authors)—and we mean here the African States, not the Arab warehouses on the coast—have had a similar origin.

Are we therefore forced to the conclusion that the State in Africa developed through contact with foreign commerce? This hypothesis is invalidated by the existence of the Mossi States which have sometimes been labelled feudal precisely because the economic base is essentially peasant, and their officials are formed from a highly developed military aristocracy, the knights of the "Nakomse". The birth of these States, for many years estimated in the 11th century, seems from the latest research to be very little anterior to the 14th century. Here it does not seem as though commerce had played any part in their formation.

We see no reason to seek for a model borrowed from Asia to explain the organisation of the African States—at the most one can point to a few superficial resemblances which stem from the common origin of royal power derived from that of the land chief. The African example clearly shows, moreover, that their kings have never been deified—on the contrary it was the gods who were conceived on the model of the kings—but whereas in Egypt and elsewhere this process has long been completed, in tropical Africa it has rarely developed so far: most of the "gods" (or rather what we incorrectly call "gods") receive far less honour than that reserved to the kings.

Delafosse had already observed, talking of the Mossi States, that it seems certain that the Mossi empires have always been sheltered from any non-Negro influence, and it is possible to deduce that the political institutions characterising them, and which we find almost everywhere in Black Africa, are of native origin.

The Role of the State in Class Exploitation

Should we, however, conclude that the role of the State as an instrument of class exploitation is a determining element of the Asiatic mode of production even if the economic functions of the State do not appear everywhere?

The authority of the representatives of the exploiting class is exercised through *public functions* formerly performed in the name of, and for the benefit of the collective: religious and economic functions (the division of the land) and military functions.

The levies collected by the exploiting class on the surplus were seen as compensation: or remunerations paid for functions fulfilled as part of the framework of the division of labour.

Engels, in a famous passage of *Anti-Dühring*, has demonstrated the very general nature of this phenomenon. But care must be taken not to confuse *public functions* with "*State power*". *The essence of the State*, we repeat, is the exercising of a superior authority on society *to maintain and perpetuate class domination.*

Class domination had already appeared, at least in embryonic form, in tribal society without the State as such existing. As Engels had already noted, it does not at all imply at first any means of coercion but rests on "free consent and custom". It is only once the scission into antagonistic classes has been fully accomplished, when the interests of the dominant class come into open contradiction with those of the masses, that the State appears and becomes a necessity.

From this moment on, the public functions carried out in the name of the collective by the dominant class *assume a State character*: their practice contributes to the consolidation of the power of the State, and helps to nourish the illusion that this power is exercised in *the interest of the collective*; that it is "above social distinctions". (Although in reality this power henceforth acts only in the interests of the dominant classes.) Briefly, the State is not a cause of class exploitation, it is merely one of its consequences; and as an element of the superstructure, we feel that it cannot enter into the definition of the mode of production.

However, we do think that the appearance of the State is of *significance* in the Asiatic mode of production in that it reveals the existence of clearly marked class antagonisms.

In tribal society, class antagonisms are only manifest in embryonic form, and are not yet characteristic of the productive relations.

In the Asiatic mode of production, there appears a dominant class detached from direct productive labour; at this elementary level, when the State begins to appear, the dominant class is to all intents and purposes at one with the State apparatus, since the authority of the dominant class derives from the exercise of State functions.

It is this which has contributed to the appearance

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(not in the sense of "illusion" but in the sense of a particularly obvious phenomenon) of an exceptional role of the State—but this role is merely a *consequence* of the characteristics of the Asiatic mode of production, and is not a *determining element* of these characteristics.

Does African Despotism Exist?

If the role of the State cannot, in our opinion, intervene as a determining element in the characterisation of a mode of production, it follows that the form in which political power is exercised cannot be invoked as primary either.

The *despotism* which Marx emphasises in regard to *Asiatic societies* is not implied by the mode of production. If by "despotism" is meant an absolute and arbitrary authority, one is forced to reject completely the concept of an African despotism.

The confusion was started by the colonists who, led astray by the pomp and ceremony surrounding the African kings, and by their conceptions formed of "oriental despotism"—have often thought they were dealing with absolute monarchs.

Just as the head of the family, the patriarch, is only the administrator of the family property, strictly controlled by the adults of the group, so is the village headman[8] strictly controlled by the assembly of the elders (the family chiefs).

Similarly in the traditional African principalities, it is the aristocracy (consisting of the royal family, the other noble families and the officials) who direct and control the royal power through the intermediary of oligarchic councils (the council of the royal family, of the electoral college, and of the elders and dignitaries).

The inheritors of the religious attributes of the former "land chief", the kings, have also conserved their responsibilities and burdens: in the event of a military defeat or of a bad harvest, they are often judged inefficient, and deposed—sometimes even killed. The Yoruba still conserve the tradition of the ritual murder of the king: the *Alafin* d'Oyo, supreme political chief, is submitted to the control of high officials (the administrative nobles) who decide every year if the *Alafin* may or may not continue to rule. If not, he is presented with some parrots' eggs, which signify that he must kill himself.

The kings are subject to multiple prohibitions: the most common being the interdiction of looking on, or crossing, water (sea or river), to eat or speak in public (they communicate with their subjects hidden by a curtain, often by the intermediary of a herald, who repeats questions and answers).

Despotism or tyranny only appears later on, in the much more fragile States formed by the Empire of military adventurists.

The most important part of the State is not so much the kings—whose apparent despotism reflects above all obedience to custom—as the *apparatus* of which he is the chief, and the supreme symbol (the royal household, the court, the ministers and the military and administrative functionaries).

If by despotism is meant the "*personalisation of the State power*", that is another matter completely —except for a few insignificant examples, no African State has known a republican form of government. The conception of the State itself is inseparable from the monarchic system.

But is this really so special to Africa? To say nothing of the tendency towards personalisation of State power which still exists so stubbornly today in the most advanced countries, was it possible for the Middle Ages to conceive the State apart from the Prince?

It seems to us that it is slave-based antiquity which for the first time brought to realisation the abstract notion of the State, of the "Republic" in the form of the "city-State". The Roman Empire brought about the beginning of the downfall, and it was necessary to await modern times to see it rise once more.

Conclusion

Our view remains that the fundamental structure of the Asiatic mode of production is limited to *the coexistence of an apparatus of production founded on the rural community—on the collective ownership of the land to the exclusion of any form of private property—and of the exploitation of man by man in forms that are often very varied, but always use the community as an intermediary.*

Defined in this way, the concept of the Asiatic mode of production (this title will obviously have to be revised)—assumes, we believe, a universal validity, applying to a stage which most human societies appear to have passed through, and of which Pre-Colonial Africa offers us many examples over a large part of its territory.

But this very general concept takes in numerous variants on account of the different forms of exploitation of man by man, of the development of antagonistic classes, of the functions assumed by the State, and of the degree of perfection of the State apparatus.

In this sense the *Asiatic societies* to which Marx referred constitute a variant of this mode of production, and the *African societies* which have attained this level, which we have described, represent another.

Studies of other regions of the globe and other historical periods would be able to show if there exist any other variants—as is probably the case.

[8] By "headman" we mean the traditional chiefs, not those imposed by the colonial administration.

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Discussion contributions on:

Rudyard Kipling Re-Estimated

A Rejoiner

Jack Dunman

IT has always seemed to me that discussion on a controversial artist can contribute more to Marxist understanding than simply praising and analysing one of our obvious allies. This exchange over Kipling bears this out.

Leslie Morton's contribution is the most important and in one respect, to which I will return, it greatly deepens our understanding. But it has to be said that, for all his concessions to Kipling's craftsmanship, realism, and appreciation of human beings, Morton's fear that we could be corrupted by an apparent enemy totally prevents him from doing him justice. It would be better to start by ungrudging appreciation of his qualities; then we can assess and attack his faults, without destroying the enormous gifts he brings to us as people, and, I emphasise, to our movement.

There is a difficulty in summing up a writer with such an enormous range: but it seems to me the most important aspects are Realism; craftsmanship; humanity, and imaginative power. There is also (most significant to socialists) the capacity—unequalled except perhaps by Dickens—to speak to and be understood by an enormously wide and popular audience, which was one of the things which interested Brecht.

Humanity—an intense and loving concern for human beings—is the most vital of all, and Comrade Albert Hill, in his all too short contribution, expressed it wonderfully well: Kipling revealed the *dignity* of his characters. Even the dying, syphillitic and degenerate gentleman-ranker in *Love of Women* (who greets his old love with the words: "I am dying, Egypt, dying") has this quality.

This indicates the error, as I see it, in Morton's approach. He says that Kipling made acceptable human being of the dupes of imperialism. He agrees that British soldiers in India were not all blackguards; and comes perilously close to saying that Kipling is all the more dangerous because he told the truth; that he would have been more acceptable if he had portrayed them as wicked and unpleasant people. Surely this is a resurrection of the old, disastrous and elementary mistake that works of Art ought to have a direct propaganda use? Morton could reply that Kipling was not telling the *whole* truth; that the people he understood so sympathetically were assisting the brutal exploitation of a subject people. This is not to be disputed; and, incidentally, if my awareness of the "propagandist for Imperialism" estimate in so many of my readers' minds led me to appear to argue otherwise, I regret it. My case in no ways rests on such an argument.

It rests rather on the belief that Kipling's imaginative and intense understanding of human beings, his never-relaxed emphasis on their essential dignity, far outweighs any negative views he may have expressed on political issues and the effects of them. I think this is a truly Marxist approach to literature, in line with the estimate which Marx and Engels themselves made of Balzac.

But here Morton has made a valuable and constructive point: that so much depends on the historical setting, and his remark that "for a Soviet reader, Kipling's imperialism is largely irrelevant". I think we should recognise that for us today, it is at any rate much less relevant than it was when the immediate task was the removal of the physical presence of British power, its army, and its civil service, from India. In those days, the underlying humanity, ultimately of infinitely greater significance, was understandably pushed into the background. Neo-colonialism and economic exploitation of course continue; but the forms are very different. There is room for argument on the degree to which this has changed the situation. My view is simply that it has changed it very profoundly, and is the real basis for a re-estimation of the writer. Indeed, it is not perhaps fanciful to say that the sordid manoeuvres and second-hand activities of neo-colonialism are made even more disgusting by contrast with the direct involvement of people, hoodwinked by an idealism which was nevertheless real to them in the earlier stages.

It is certainly not fanciful, but most important to understand, that part of the admiration for Kipling which persists in the Socialist countries (Moscow has just had an impressive centenary meeting) rests on the fact that many, a great many, of the qualities which Kipling felt were needed in rank-and-file empire builders were, and are, precisely the qualities needed in the builders of Socialism.

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I am sure that this accounts for the popularity of *If* in Czechoslovakia, which Jessie Kocmanova describes so vividly. If this poem had first appeared in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (which it certainly would if it had been written by a Russian), every one of us would regard it as a splendid statement of socialist ethics.

Humanism

I have stressed his humanism as the greatest factor in Kipling's appeal to us; but the fact that it is incorrect to explain away his support for imperialism should not obscure the powerful element of *critical* realism in many of his works. I mentioned several of the later stories, bearing on war, and the position of women under capitalism. There is an early work, which seems to me one of the most devastating attacks on capitalism ever written, and one which is done in terms of the effects on individuals. It is the well-known poem, *The Mary Gloster* (1896). Superficially—the rugged story of the self-made millionaire shipping magnate, risen from the ranks, and let down by his educated and effete son (the poem is a death bed monologue addressed to his son). Underneath—we learn that Sir Antony made his first steps up the ladder by unquestioningly carrying out the orders of unscrupulous shipping owners, sailing or losing ships as he was told. He cheated his friend and collaborator over an invention. He speaks of his dead wife with exaggerated sentiment, but in fact he killed her and all his other children by dragging them round the world to be born and die on his rotten ships. There is a masterly ambiguity about the surviving son; we are left unsure whether he is really effete, or whether his father hates the sight of him just because he has acquired culture and other interests. The old man is dying, unloved, unregretted, and totally alone, comforted only by an insane plan for his body to be sunk in a ship where his wife was buried at sea. And yet, such is Kipling's art and heart, the old blackguard remains a human being, not entirely hateful, until his final death-rattle. I know of no work of comparable length that gives a tenth part of the understanding of early capitalism, and its effects on people, which is in this 180-line poem.

Morton recognises his technical mastery; I would only add that it was such that it enabled him to produce works of extreme complexity with many meanings, and often with profound philosophical implications; and also to reach an enormous popular audience in a way which few other writers have achieved. Ordinary speech, music hall rhythms and forms he used in a way which writers in our movement should carefully study.

I am sure that this was one of the things in which Brecht was so deeply interested. This is a little aside from the argument, but the visit of the *Berliner Ensemble* in August gave me an opportunity of a talk with one of its leading members, who had worked with Brecht ever since the earliest days in Augsburg. Rather anxiously I enquired if I had exaggerated the influence; and I was told immediately that it would be impossible to do so; "Kipling roams through the pages of the early Brecht". As late as 1932 there was planned a new German edition of the collected works; my informant and Brecht were to do a new translation of the poems, which only Hitler's arrival prevented. It was intriguing to find, in the facsimile programme of the 1st performance of the *Threepenny Opera* in 1928, which was given out at the Old Vic in August, it was described as "from the English of John Gay, and including lyrics by François Villon and Rudyard Kipling". I do not see how our writers can ignore the example of Brecht, who all his life and with such brilliant success studied how to be a Marxist writer. The connection between these two calls out for thorough study and research.

Style

A point which has not come up in the discussion but which I have encountered more than once, has nothing to do with political tendencies. It is that a number of people, who are not in the least affected by Kipling's political attitudes, and who recognise many of his fine qualities, cannot overcome a dislike of something in his style. I can just understand that such a feeling can exist. I do not find it easy, or even possible, to understand how it can outweigh the other things. In all the Arts, it is always necessary, and not often difficult, to accept even extreme mannerisms if the content is of value. But it certainly exists; perhaps it is another subject for further study and discussion.

No writer has so diverse aspects; many have not even been mentioned. I will finish with only one of them: partly to give myself pleasure, and partly, I hope, to please readers, including some who may be surprised to be pleased!

One of Kipling's endearing traits was his admiration of other writers, and he wrote many tributes to them, some in surprising forms (*The Janeites*, for example), but all of deep perception. They include the Authorised Version, Ben Jonson, Pepys, Horace, Jane Austen. He wrote a short poem, called *The Craftsman*, in which Shakespeare describes (to Jonson) the commonplace incidents which his poet's observation had transmuted into the material of his works:

> "Saying how, at an alehouse under Cotswold,
> He had made sure of his very Cleopatra,
> Drunk with enormous, salvation-contemning
> Love for a tinker.
> "How at Bankside, a boy drowning kittens

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Winced at the business; whereupon his sister
(Lady Macbeth aged seven) thrust 'em under,
Sombrely scornful.
"How on a Sabbath, hushed and compassionate—
She being known since her birth to the townsfolk—
Stratford dredged and delivered from Avon
Dripping Ophelia."

(*The Years Between*)

There are two meanings in this work also. Kipling is not only imagining Shakespeare; he is describing how he himself pursued the craft of which he was so proud. Has any writer better described this aspect of literary creation?

We shall lose a tremendous lot if we finish, as Morton does, with pity for a great writer spoiled. Rather we should value, enjoy, and use, so rich and so human an achievement.

The Freedom of Art

Paul Redway

ALREADY a considerable amount has been written about Honor Arundel's book *The Freedom of Art* outside the columns of *Marxism Today*. Those who have reviewed it seem to be unified in their main concern which is firstly to point out what the book *is not*. Obviously there can be little disagreement on what the book is not, or, for that matter, on what it is.

> "Honor Arundel . . . claims no more than to be opening these and other questions for discussion." A. L. Morton, *Comment*.
>
> "What the author is out to do is to raise a number of questions which a Marxist approach must take account of." Arnold Kettle, *Daily Worker*.

Whilst recognising the importance of presenting this subject in a popular way we have done little more than continue to raise only questions for a considerable time. The reasons for this problem are clearly defined by Arnold Kettle in the same review:

> "One of the things . . . that has held back Marxist discussion of many problems is fear of saying something less than the whole truth, that might be dangerous. This is a difficult question. It is one of the greatest strengths of Marxism that it recognises that ideas really do matter, that wrong or bad ideas are not just untrue in an abstract sense but can be dangerous in a human sense. The problem is to find ways of testing and reviewing ideas without them being treated irresponsibly, as though they have no practical and even fatal effects."

Contemporary Movement in Art

From questions posed (not always the most vital) there would seem to be a sometimes vague or hesitant approach to the manner of proceeding. It appears that apart from the questioning of art we have, as yet, little in the way of ideas that do matter. The freedom of art, by its very nature, must involve the many sided problems of both artist and audience and I suggest that until we set about the task of analysing the nature of the contemporary movement in art we will be able to make little progress:

> "It is much more than a quick linking of art with social conditions and political forces . . . a problem can only be fully understood when all its aspects, all its implications, all its determinants have been established and examined—which means in short a detailed search for truth." Honor Arundel, *The Freedom of Art*.

We find in Honor Arundel's book a basic starting point for analysis, yet the only notable application of Marxist thought to appear on the arts in recent years is John Berger's *Success and Failure of Picasso*. Even Ernst Fischer in *The Necessity of Art*, although promoting a positive range of discussion, omitted a number of significant factors.

Today, more than ever, the bewildering extent of theory and practice in the contemporary arts has confused not only the people but also the artist. Bill Carritt, in his article in the December issue of *Marxism Today*, points to experience of the past which should make us hesitate to condemn art which first shocks, yet it must be said that the art of the new movements of the twentieth century calls for our immediate reactions. Art which cannot be understood is not to be left alone until we do grasp it. The medium of painting is one in which the divisions that separate and isolate art from its fundamental functions are most easily recognisable. Idea, content and form have become divided to be ends in themselves. In order to understand why this has happened usually Marxists can adequately develop an analysis of the conditions which makes such phenomena comprehensible. However, especially in painting, a theory of aesthetics which can also help us to understand and judge works of art

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seems to be regrettably lacking. The visible world does not become the real world except through the operation of thought. The objects which strike us with the most force are not always those which are the richest in truth.

Cubism

Any case for a realist aesthetic in painting today must involve the movement of cubism:

> "It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of cubism. It was a revolution in the visual arts as great as that which took place in the early Renaissance. Its effects on later art, on the film, and on architecture are already so numerous we hardly notice them. . . . As a group the cubists were the last optimists in western art, and by the same token their work still represents the most developed way of seeing yet achieved. It is to cubism that the next serious innovators are bound to return." John Berger, *Success and Failure of Picasso*.

The importance of cubism and its parallel between its theory and that of materialist philosophy is easily understood by examining a statement made by Juan Gris (*Bulletin de la Vie Artistique*, Paris 1925):

> "I am clearly aware that, at the start, cubism was simply a new way of representing the world. . . . By way of natural reactions against the fugitive elements employed by impressionists, painters felt the need to discover less unstable elements in the objects to be represented. And they chose that category of elements which reamins in the mind through apprehension and is not continually changing. For the momentary effects of light, for example, they substituted what they believed to be the actual quality of this form. But that led to a kind of representation which was purely analytical, for the only relationship that existed was that between the intellect of the painter and the objects, and practically never was there any relationship between objects themselves. Moreover, this is perfectly natural, for each new branch of intellectual activity always begins with description . . . now that the analysis of yesterday has become a synthesis by the expression of the relationship between objects themselves, this reproach is no longer valid. If what has been called cubism is only appearance then cubism has disappeared; if it is an aesthetic then it has been absorbed into painting. . . . This being so, cubism must inevitably be connected with every manifestation of contemporary thought. It is possible to invent a technique or manner independently, but one cannot invent the whole complexity of a state of mind."

I have quoted this passage from Gris at some length because I believe we can find in it some of the vital factors of which we must take account in determining ideas about non-decorative painting. We cannot understand what art should be unless we understand what it has become. Bill Carritt rightly asserts that the relationship between art, philosophy and politics must be the first principle of Marxist aesthetics.

Today many young artists are consciously reflecting their rejection of bourgeois values and combined with the growing interest in Marxist theory our priorities must be to show clearly our method of thought and thus to offer the alternative.

The Laws of Dialectics

Mike Steadman

PART III of Maurice Cornforth's *Marxism and the Linguistic Philosophy* together with his article in November's *Marxism Today* deals boldly with an aspect of Marxism long over-ripe for scrutiny. We have hitherto acknowledged that "most of the work remains to be done" more out of intellectual courtesy than honest doubt, and if Cornforth's success is solely that of forcing our noses to the philosophical grind-stone he will have done well.

However, the contributions of Emile Burns and John Lewis (December and January) might suggest that *all* the work is before us, for in addition to promoting what I think are serious misconceptions, both either overlook or ignore Cornforth's exposure of a key point at which traditional formulations of dialectical laws are vunerable and a line of argument which offers to place Dialectics on a more sophisticated base.

Cornforth's article primarily concerned itself with two questions: what conditions must a generalisation satisfy to be counted among the *bona fide* laws of the empirical sciences and does the apparent fact that current formulations of dialectical laws fail to meet these conditions mean that we are to regard them as generalisations of an altogether different logical type. Cornforth, following Karl Popper, holds the susceptibility to falsification to be the distinctive feature of empirical laws, and since Burns sees Cornforth as in danger of changing philosophical camps through the adoption of this criterion it is as well to see what this criterion says.

Although the sciences *frame* generalisations which are necessary in the sense that they are required to

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hold for any contingent data experience will supply, there must, unless an omniscient agency is at work, exist respects in which *every* empirical law is false. And this is what Marxism, in its insistance on the "approximate" status of scientific theory, has always said; for deeply embedded within the materialist world-view is the idea of the infinite and only partially knowable qualities of nature. Thus a thoroughgoing materialist science requires laws whose error is *intrinsic* to them, because it is logically impossible to specify all the infinite actual and potential properties of the physical world in a finite set of concepts. The infinity of nature is not an innocuous article of faith: its implication that the very next observation may force the revision of any scientific doctrine no matter how well established has the practical consequence that the search for data potentially falsifying existing theory is the principal means by which the sciences advance. What the criterion of falsifiability demands is that this "provisional" character of science be encapsulated in the very logic of the formulation of every *bona fide* empirical law. Clearly the formulation of an empirical law in such a way as to render its domain of validity infinite and unconditional cannot be regarded as in any way provisional and thus this demand is at the same time a demand for the specification of the *conditions* of its validity. Such specification involves the requirement that observable facts which are predictive consequences of the law should be referred to directly or indirectly by (technically, be deducible from) the law. In other words, an empirical law should say something concrete about an observable event occuring in some specific space-time region, for only thus can it be tested and potentially falsified. A law which is not empirically testable is not an empirical law.

Question-Begging

Contrary to what Emile Burns appears to believe, our contention that all knowledge is derived from things existing independent of our consciousness is not in dispute. But, the proposition that "for even the most generalised laws the ultimate test is their conformity to objective reality" is question-begging in this context (and somewhat misleading, too, for the case of logico-mathematical laws is not quite so clear). What is in dispute is *how we know* that they are in conformity. To say "experience" is to say next to nothing, for the question remains of what grounds we have for deciding between those rival theories of "experience" which are inherently untestable, which, in the case of "the most general laws" becomes acute when we consider that if they are not testable (falsifiable) then "experience" can support incompatible laws. Emile Burns is right, however, that Cornforth oughtn't to use the argument from inconceivability in categorising generalisations, but for the wrong reasons. It is not that it is subjectivist (which it isn't) but that it is redundant. The criterion of falsifiability requires only that certain *logical* relations hold between a theory and the class of all logically possible singular statements of fact. It is not, e.g., that we cannot imagine the dialectical laws being falsified by a singular statement of fact—it is logically impossible because these laws say nothing about such facts.

Misunderstanding about this question of truth-conditions leads both Burns and D.N.L. (January) into confusion about logical and mathematical laws. Both compound *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions (it is necessary for apples to exist before we can count them but their existence is not sufficient to explain why we can substitute anything for apples in "2 apples + 2 apples=4 apples" and still get a necessary truth). If, as Burns and D.N.L. appear to want to say, the test of logical and mathematical laws is experience, then experience should be capable of falsifying them—which it isn't. In what sense was the tensor calculus tested against experience when on its discovery it had no application? And the only "severely prescribed" condition of both D.N.L.'s (invalid) examples is the Law of Identity. However, we ought not, like John Lewis, to jump to the other extreme and deny necessity to anything other than *statements* of an analytic nature (true by virtue of meaning or logical form). This logician's convention (for that is what it is) is worse than being non-materialist—it is exceedingly boring. If we cannot talk about thing x being necessarily related to thing y in the sense that one thing could not *be* without the other, all connections are reduced to conjuctions—and we are back to Hume.

Falsifiability

It would seem, then, that the criterion of falsifiability leaves us with three alternative ways of treating the Dialectics (a) by adjusting our conception of *bona fide* scientific laws so that inherently unfalsifiable generalisations may be counted among them, (b) by specifying the truth-conditions of dialectical laws so as to render them falsifiable, (c) by construing them as generalisations of a logically different type (the line taken by Cornforth).

Now it might be urged that Cornforth has sounded the retreat before having seen that Popper's troops are actually marching in our direction. Firstly, we can I think divide those propositions which Popper brands as metaphysical (unfalsifiable) into two groups (a) that group for which there is *no evidence whatever* in sense-experience (e.g. "The world is my dream", "God is immanent in all things", "Everything is composed of a hidden substance x") and (b) that group for which there is ostensible confirming

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evidence ("Every event has a cause", "All actions have equal reactions"). Now we do not need an elaborate theory to show that those in the first group are metaphysical, but what I find interesting is that those in the second group are subdivided into those which might play a legitimate role in science (e.g., the old fluid-theory of electricity) and only one other for which there is considerable confirming evidence—the principle of causality (the universal existence of causal laws). There may be others, but this is the one of significance.

Secondly, we may note that no matter which way one interprets the (yet unexplored) relationship between the principle of causality and the laws of dialectics, the truth of the latter is dependent upon the truth of the former. Furthermore, the principle of causality is on approximately the same level of generality as dialectical laws. What this implies is that if, like Cornforth, we are to regard the laws of dialectics as category principles then we have every reason to regard the principle of causality as a category principle. But category principles are defined by means of the criterion of falsifiability. The question now is: is the principle of causality falsifiable? Alternatively, since category principles are also defined by means of the fact that their breach results in "absurdity", "fantasy", "uninformativeness" (Cornforth, wrongly I think, treats them as equivalent), does the denial of the principle of causality result in "absurdity" etc.? Now, regarding the first question, there is certainly *said* to be a realm of nature in which the principle is no longer applicable, *viz*, at the quantum-mechanical level. Whether the indeterminist interpretations of the Heisenberg-von Neumann theorems are true or false is irrelevant in this context, for the point is that, according to the status alloted to the principle of causality by the criterion of falsifiability and *ipso facto* the category theory, the question *ought never to have arisen.*

Causal Laws

At the barest minimum it is clear that certain observations have revealed a state of affairs not governable by known causal laws. Thus there is at least sense in the statement "the principle of causality is no longer applicable". Hence there is also sense in saying "the principle of causality has been falsified". Therefore the principle of causality is an empirical generalisation. (It is plainly no use to say that further research will eventually enable the prediction of e.g., the timing of electron "jumps" and that therefore the causality principle will be re-established.) Of course, we can take the line that this principle (and thus Dialectics) is simply methodological, a useful guide to enquiry, as is done by John Lewis. But a methodological rule is neither true nor false, and what Marxists want to say is that this principle and the laws of dialectics are *descriptively* true and *explanatory* of essential features of nature. That Lewis's path is treacherous is illustrated by Popper's progress: he first threw out the causality principle as "metaphysical", brought it in by the back-door as a methodological rule and then subsequently embraced indeterminism.

Thus it follows that either the principle of causality is not a category principle or that some category principles are falsifiable. Since unfalsifiability is part of the definition of a category principle the latter is self-contradictory. It is clear, too, that the denial of the causality principle does not result in "absurdity" or "fantasy", and it can not be said that a denial of a category principle which does not result in absurdity is not a category principle in the first place on pain of making category principles merely analytically true. So we appear to be left with at least one falsifiable high-level generalisation which is not only philosophically associated with, but actually *implied* by, the laws of dialectics. Hence, if the principle of causality is falsified, then by *modus tollens* the laws of dialectics are falsified too. Which means that they are empirically falisfiable. Which means that they can not be category principles.

Alternatively, we might ask what precisely specifies a category principle. For example, Cornforth is plainly not saying that all high-level generalisations which are not falsifiable are category principles, on the grounds that they violate other criteria. But what are the other criteria? Supremely universal? So is "The world is my dream". Principles for the assembly of information? So is "The world is my dream". Thus there are absolutely universal non-falsifiable generalisations which assemble information which are not category principles. Informativeness? What is informativeness? Is this what is unique to category principles? Now it seems to me that there are only two ways of interpreting this criterion (a) category principles "provide instructions or rules about how to think properly", i.e., are methodological principles which are neither true nor false, or (b) they are descriptive of nature in the way that other scientific laws are descriptive. Of course, we *can* have it both ways, but this does not show that they are qualitatively distinct from empirical generalisations since it is precisely in this light that we may regard the general form of the law of conservation of energy (which has all the marks of a category principle). But the law of conservation of energy is falsifiable when its truth-conditions are known, i.e., when its "initial conditions" are determined. And the same is the case with the causality principle. Could this not also be true of the laws of dialectics? Isn't "most of the work" that "remains to be done" the job of casting these laws into the subjunctive?

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Social Economic Formations

Ahmed Osman

I READ the article of Prof. Ernst Hoffman on Social-Economic Formations, in the September issue of *Marxism Today*, with much interest. Since the aim of the author is not only to discuss the ideas of Hobsbawm but also various problems connected with the theme, I would like to make a few general remarks that may contribute something to the discussion.

Marx says that class struggle "Each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes." This is fundamentally the case.

However, there is wide scope for a stalemate. Some aspects of this phenomenon are either the revolutionary action being just calmed down for various reasons, or the counter-revolution being able to retain or restore the fundamentals of the old order of things; or else, which is very real, that the outcome of the struggle, more or less stalemated on the original battlefield of the particular society, could be realised in a process of synthesis or fusion—in the Marxist sense—outside that society, in another society which is more or less in contact with it and under its influence—leading to the next higher formation.

Another phenomenon is that the action and influence of the preceding social-economic formation on the determination of the next-higher formation may be clear and decisive. Hence the preceding formation is a requisite precondition for the formation of the next-higher.

But this is not the case the other way round. The point is that once the next-higher formation is established its action and influence on the preceding formations are less pronounced and definite, i.e., its impact on the preceding formation, if it exists, is indirect.

For the preceding formations are still functioning in accordance with the previously existing fundamental, objective, laws. Once this is denied, as Hobsbawm tends to do, then the conception of "The mixture and coexistence of different forms. . . ." would become rather obscure.

For if the fundamental laws did not exist, then the new factor, the coming into being of the next-higher formation, would have much influence and impact in transforming the preceding formation into some other formation, if not into the next-higher, then into some still higher formation. The process is fundamentally in one direction, and not simply a mutual, reciprocal direction.

Hence the idea of the author "one of the methodological requisites is to study first the original process of evolution of one formation into the next-higher and to differentiate from these primary processes the later secondary processes, as in the case of the primitive communist societies drawn into the orbit of existing centres of the Asiatic or of even higher formation" is to be considered true since, as is stated above, the process fundamentally is in one direction.

One more point, since "our present factual knowledge is infinitely greater", according to the author, then one may expect that the result of analysis probably would not neatly fit in with the Marxist categories of the pre-capitalist formations. One may expect the classification of the categories into a diverse structural succession of orders, rather than into chronological orders and stages, that may better conform to the realities of historical evolution.

The author does emphasise the necessity of elaborating the theory in connection with pre-capitalist formations; Hobsbawm's ideas are a step towards that, and indeed require more consideration.

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